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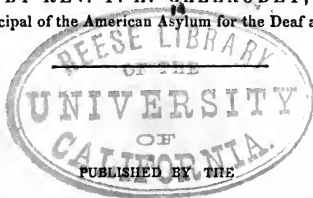
THE  
HISTORY OF JOSEPH,  
FOR  
CHILDREN AND YOUTH;

DESIGNED ALSO AS AN AID

TO FAMILIAR BIBLICAL EXPOSITION IN FAMILIES,  
SABBATH SCHOOLS, AND BIBLE CLASSES.

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BY REV. T. H. GALLAUDET,  
Late Principal of the American Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb.



AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,

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## PREFACE.

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"Do, tell me a story," said a smiling little boy, who was sitting in his father's lap—"do, father, tell me a story."

So, his father told him one; and again the request was made—"do, father, tell me another pretty story, and a long one too."

The story was told, and Robert listened to it with the deepest attention and interest.

"Do, do, father, tell me one more story—just one more, and I will not ask you again."

"My son," said his father, "I have told you two stories; and now I wish to talk with you a little about that verse in the Bible which you repeated to me this morning."

Robert continued to beg for one more story.

"No, my son," said his father, "I have no more stories to tell you now. Sometimes I must talk to you about God, and our Savior, and what we must do, that we may be prepared, when we die, to go to heaven, and be good and happy there, for ever."

In saying this his countenance became serious, though his look was mild and pleasant; and his voice had a tone of solemnity, without being harsh or forbidding.

Robert perfectly understood it. He knew that it was *required of him* to be attentive. *He* also became serious, and listened to the instructions of his father with an interest which showed how much parental authority, mingled with kindness, can effect, when the child is accustomed to reverence this authority, and to love this kindness.

Did the father do right ?

“Certainly,” you say; “it is important that children should be taught, at proper times, to listen to instruction, and to acquire the habit of patient and serious attention to religious truth. It will not do to be always entertaining them with amusing stories.”

Well, if it is important, sometimes, thus *to talk* to children—it is equally so, thus *to write* for them. If they ought to acquire the habit of listening attentively to the good instruction which is given to them *in conversation*, at home—or in the Sabbath school, and in the church; it is equally important that they should acquire a similar habit of *reading attentively* such books as are prepared to teach them their duty to God, to their fellow-men, and to themselves.

If they read none but story books, intended almost entirely

to entertain them; or, if they read so many of these books as to dislike to read those of a more serious and instructive kind—*then there is very great danger of their acquiring a strong dislike to the reading of the Bible.*

For the Bible is very far from being a book of mere entertainment. It is full, indeed, of interesting things; but to understand them, and to get good from them, requires *patient thinking and serious feeling.*

Let parents and teachers beware—lest, by indulging children too much in the perusal of mere books of amusement, they acquire such a fondness for fiction, that it will be difficult for them to read any thing that demands patient and continued attention, and tends to produce serious thoughts and feelings.

Should this lead to their considering it an irksome and disagreeable task to sit down, at suitable times, to the faithful perusal of the sacred Scriptures—what an error in their education has been committed—what a tremendous evil has been incurred!

Books, surely, ought to be placed in the hands of children and youth—many more than are now in circulation—which will require some effort of mind, on their part;—which will demand more or less of continued, patient, and serious thought.

Truth, too—above all, *the facts of the Bible*—should form a considerable part of a child's religious reading, instead of that mass of *fictitious narrative* which, at present, so greatly abounds.

Grant that all fiction is not to be discarded ; yet there are limits, surely, to its use, in the religious instruction of our children and youth. Its influence is, just now, immense. It sways the minds of the rising generation, who have access to books, to a vast extent. It is molding their intellectual habits. It is forming their taste. It is influencing their moral feelings. It is training them up, in too many instances, to a loose, desultory, luxurious, and disconnected kind of reading, which will render to them, in maturer life, all our *standard works of religious truth*, by which the souls of English and American Christians, of earlier days, were nurtured to deep thought and a vigorous faith—insipid, irksome, revolting.

In this volume, and also in *The History of Jonah*, not long since published, the author has made a humble attempt to do something to remedy the evils to which he has alluded.

The success of this attempt awaits the decision of the religious public.

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THE  
HISTORY OF JOSEPH.



CHAPTER I.

Address to children and youth.

ONE of the most interesting and instructive histories in the Bible is that of JOSEPH. Children and youth have always been fond of reading it. I wish to tell it to them in this book in such a way that they may *get good* from it.

You have read many books, my dear children, merely to *get amusement* from them. You have liked the entertaining stories which they contained. But

you must read books *for instruction* also. For you need to learn what is useful; and what will teach you how you may grow up to do good in the world, and be prepared to be holy and happy, for ever, in heaven.

You play sometimes. What fine sport you have! I should like to see you playing. It does you good. It makes you cheerful and happy. It gives you healthful exercise, and helps you to grow strong and active.

But it will not do to play too much. Something else must be done. You must get ready to be useful as you grow up to be men and women. Boys and girls who play all the time, and do nothing but amuse themselves, will dislike all kinds of labor as they grow up. They will become idle and useless people; doing no good to others, and getting none themselves.

It is just so in your reading. If you read only story books, to be amused by them, you will become so fond of this kind of reading that you will dislike instructive and useful books. You will think it a hard task to read them; just as a child who plays all the time thinks it very disagreeable to do any kind of work. Your minds will become weak. You will be able to think scarcely at all about good and important things. And what will be the worst evil—

the Bible, the best of all books, will seem to you a very dull and tedious book indeed.

I do not mean to say that you should *never read* any story books that will amuse you ; though I fear many children read such kind of books a great deal more than is good for them. But what I mean is, that you should be more fond of reading books that are useful and instructive ; books that will make it necessary for you *to think* when you read them—sometimes *to think hard*, so that you may understand clearly what you read, and get good from it. Especially should you be fond of reading those books which are written to lead you *to think about your souls, and what you must do to be saved*.

Perhaps some of you, my dear children, will say that this is too long and sober an introduction. You may feel very impatient to have the history of Joseph begin.

This shows that there is some reason for my thinking that you have been so much in the habit of reading for mere amusement, that you cannot bear to read any thing of a serious and instructive kind, even for four or five minutes.

If this is really so, you ought immediately to endeavor to take an interest in that kind of reading which will require you to be *fixed in attention, patient in thinking, and serious in feeling*.

If any of you are unwilling to do this, perhaps you had better shut up the book, and not read any farther. For, although there are a great many things in the history of Joseph which are very interesting, and which I shall endeavor to present in an agreeable and entertaining manner to my young readers, still I shall, all the while, mingle with these things thoughts of an instructive and useful kind.

Sometimes I shall go farther than this. I shall be very solemn and serious in what I say to you. I shall talk to you very plainly about your being sinners; and about your guilt and danger; and about the need of your repentance, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and of your hearts being changed by the Holy Spirit; and about other things like these, which it is very important for you to know, to believe, and to feel.

If I thought that you were all quite willing, my dear children, to listen attentively to such things, while we go along in the history of Joseph, with how much pleasure I should sit down, day after day, to write it!

Pray that you may feel thus willing; and I will add my prayer to yours.

May God enable me so to write this book, and you so to read it, that, with the blessing of his Holy Spirit, it may do good to your souls!



## CHAPTER II.

Joseph's parentage.—Jacob's removal from Mesopotamia.—Death of Rachel.—Birth of Benjamin.—How children ought to treat their mothers.

JOSEPH was the son of Jacob. Isaac was his grandfather, and Abraham his great grandfather. It was no small privilege to him to have such ancestors. For they were pious men, and all in their families were taught what they must do to obtain the friendship of God, and be blessed of him.

Joseph was born in Mesopotamia, more than three thousand five hundred years ago. His father had lived in that country about fourteen years, with Laban, a rich husbandman, and assisted him in taking care of his cattle, sheep, and goats.

Laban was the uncle of Jacob, being the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's mother. He lived in a very fertile country, between two fine rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates. He owned a great deal of land, and large herds and flocks, and had many servants to work for him.

Jacob married the two daughters of Laban, Leah and Rachel; the latter of whom was the mother of Joseph. Beside these, he had two other wives—Bilhah and Zilpah.

God permitted men, at that time, to have more than one wife. He had good reasons for doing so; though, at the present time it is forbidden, and would be a great sin.

Jacob had a large family while he was living with Laban. I think, it will be well for you to remember the names of his children. For his sons, in their turn, were the fathers of children; and they, of other children; and so on, until they made, altogether, *a great people*, called *Israelites*, and became a powerful nation in the land of Canaan. They were called Israelites because they were descended from Jacob, whose other name was *Israel*; and his twelve sons are called *the twelve patriarchs*.

The names of Jacob's children, in the order of their ages, were the following:—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Ashur, Issachar, Zebulun, (Dinah, a daughter) Joseph, and Benjamin.

Rachel was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. All of them were born in Mesopotamia, except Benjamin, of whom, before long, I shall tell you something more particularly.

When Joseph was about six years old, and Reuben, the eldest son, about nineteen, their father concluded to remove, with his family, from Mesopotamia, and return to Canaan, his native land. His aged

father, Isaac, was still living there. It was a fertile and pleasant country; and Jacob thought that it would be better for himself and his family to go there, than to remain where he was. Besides, God had told him, in a dream, to do it; and he knew that, in obeying God, he and his wives and children would be in the way of their duty, and under the protection of the Almighty.

It was a long and difficult journey, and must have required a great deal of resolution and enterprise. For Jacob was, now, a man of large property. He had goods of various kinds; many camels and asses; and numerous herds of cattle, and flocks of sheep and goats. To remove all these, with his wives and children, his man-servants and maid-servants, was truly a laborious undertaking. But God had commanded it; and in obeying his commands, remember, my dear children, that no difficulties or dangers, however great, should weaken our resolution, or make us afraid. Who needs to fear when he is in the path of duty, and when the Almighty goes before him, and directs his way!

I shall not attempt to describe the setting out of Jacob on his journey, nor the particulars of what happened to him before it was ended. You can read about it, in the Bible.

One thing, however, I cannot pass over without

mentioning ; for, young as he was, it must have affected Joseph very much, and filled his bosom with the deepest sorrow.

It was five years after leaving Mesopotamia, having stopped at one place and another for a longer or shorter space of time, that Jacob was approaching Ephrath, and had come very near the town, when Rachel was taken suddenly sick and died. Just before she died Benjamin was born ; Joseph being about eleven years old. She was buried in the way to Ephrath, afterward called Bethlehem, and her husband built a monument of stone over her grave.

Joseph was just at the age to feel the loss of his mother most deeply ; and no doubt, in the bitterness of his grief, he wept and mourned over her ; and thought of all her tender care of him ; and felt how sad it would be for him to see her face, and hear her voice of kindness no more.

He loved dearly his little brother Benjamin, who was born under these afflicting circumstances ; and the strength of his attachment you will see in a subsequent period of his life.

My dear children, do you know the value of a good and kind mother ? It is worth more to a child than tens of thousands of gold and silver. Do you know the value of a *pious mother*, who prays for and with her child, and endeavors to guide its soul to

heaven? It is worth more to her child than the whole world, with all that it contains.

*Have* you such a mother? O! love her; obey her; listen to her kind advice; remember all the good instructions she has given you; do all you can to make her happy.

Have you *had* such a mother? Think of her with the warmest affection. Keep near to your heart the memory of all she did for you; of all her prayers; her admonitions; her warnings; her reproofs.

How are you treating such a mother, if she is still living, or her memory, if she is dead? Can it be that one undutiful, ungrateful, wicked child shall read these pages, and while stopping for a moment, with Joseph, at the tomb of Rachel—not pause, and consider, and mourn over that wickedness of heart which can lead a son or a daughter to forget and despise the prayers, the entreaties, the tears of a pious and affectionate mother?

If living—how does such conduct wring her soul with anguish? If dead—can you endure the recollection of that look and voice of love, and tenderness, and pity, and not be melted into deep repentance before God?

## CHAPTER III.

Jacob arrives at Mamre.—Description of Hebron.—Joseph's Character.—Jacob's affection for him.—His brethren envy him.—Sin, if not repented of, increases rapidly.

Not long after this, Jacob arrived at Mamre, and found his aged father, Isaac, still alive, although he was more than one hundred and sixty years old. It must have been a very happy meeting; and Joseph, I dare say, was very glad to see his grandfather, of whom he had heard much, and also the pleasant place in which he lived.

This place was about twenty-seven miles south of Jerusalem, and was afterward called Hebron. Near it, in the cave of Machpelah, which Abraham purchased for that purpose, both himself and his wife Sarah were buried; and in the same cave Isaac, when he died, at the age of one hundred and eighty years, was laid by the side of his father and mother.

Travellers, who have not long since visited that part of Palestine, tell us that Hebron is situated on the slope of a mountain, in a fertile valley; and that the sides of the neighboring hills are covered with the oak, the arbutus, the fir, and a variety of flower-

ing shrubs. The adjoining country is better cultivated than that near Jerusalem. The town has a strong castle; abundance of provisions; a number of shops and neat houses; and about four hundred families of Arabs, beside a hundred Jewish houses.

It was, undoubtedly, a flourishing and fertile country in Isaac's and Jacob's time, or they would not have remained there with such large families, and such numerous herds and flocks, as they had.

A principal part of Jacob's business consisted in taking care of his herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and goats. His sons assisted him in doing this; and the first thing which we read in the Bible, of any occupation in which Joseph was engaged, is, that *he was feeding the flock with his brethren, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah.*

He was then seventeen years of age, and beloved by Jacob more than any other of his children; for *he was the son of his old age*, being born when Jacob was ninety years old. Probably, too, Joseph was a youth who conducted well, and showed a degree of wisdom that was remarkable for one of his years. His brothers, with the exception of Benjamin, who was yet quite a boy, seem not to have behaved as well as Joseph did. And we find that the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, with whom Joseph had been while taking care of the flock, either said or did

some wicked thing, of which Joseph felt it to be his duty to tell his father.

Being such a son, it was no wonder that Jacob loved him more than he did his brothers, and probably often spoke of him in their presence, as affording an example which they ought to follow. Joseph wore, also, a very beautiful and costly garment of various colors, which his father gave him as a peculiar mark of his affection, and, not unlikely, to distinguish him from his brothers, and to show that in some respects he was superior to them; for after this we do not read any more of his keeping the flocks, and it is supposed that he stayed at home with his father, to aid him in the care of his family and in his other concerns.

All these things led Joseph's brethren to regard him with great hatred and envy. When they met him *they could not speak peaceably unto him*. They often passed by him without giving him a single kind look or word; and sometimes they used toward him violent and reproachful language. It is probable, too, that, when alone by themselves, they spoke very disrespectfully of their aged father, complaining of his great affection to their brother, and accusing Joseph of meddling in their concerns, and of informing Jacob of what they said or did.

Have *you* ever felt so toward any of your bro-



thers or sisters, or toward any of your companions at school, because they conducted better than you did, and received the approbation of your parents or teachers, and had something given to them, while you had nothing given to you? If you have, then you know what *envy* is, and you ought to know too, and to feel what a base and wicked thing it is *to be envious of others*. If they are good and happy, and are beloved and esteemed, and have things which you have not, ought you not to rejoice in it, instead of envying them, and wishing to see them deprived of what they have, that *you* may enjoy it? ought you not to endeavor to imitate their example, and partake with them of their happiness? For parents and teachers have esteem, and love, and other things, enough and enough, to bestow upon *all the children* who conduct well, and deserve their approbation.

You will see as we go on to the history of Joseph, to what great wickedness the envy of his brothers toward him finally led. Ah! you know not to what *your envy* toward your brothers and sisters may lead! Sin of all kinds may appear small at first, but it grows very rapidly, and soon becomes dreadful indeed. Did you ever think to what your giving *one blow* in anger, if not repented of, will lead? If you do not repent of it, and pray to God

that you may overcome such a temper, it will lead you, when provoked, to give *a still more violent blow* in greater anger. And have you thought to what all this may lead? Will it make you shudder when I tell you that it has led—to *murder*; that it may lead you to be *a murderer*?

So your *envious feelings*, if not repented of and overcome, may lead you, as you will see in the case of Joseph's brethren, to do some very wicked and dreadful thing.

Have you repented of such feelings? Do you now truly repent of them, and beseech God to give you the Holy Spirit, that you may entirely overcome them? If you have not yet done this, I entreat you to delay to do it no longer.

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## CHAPTER IV.

Joseph's dreams.—His brethren go to Shechem.—Description of this place.—Joseph sent to inquire after his brethren.

WHILE Joseph was treated with so much hatred by his brethren, he was led by a dream, which God produced in his mind as he was asleep, to expect

some future great change in his condition, that would place him very high above them.

He dreamed that they were all together in the field, binding up the sheaves of grain which had been reaped. All at once, the sheaf which Joseph had bound stood upright of itself, and the sheaves which his brethren had bound stood round about it and bowed down before it.



He told this dream to his brethren, and their hatred toward him was greatly increased by it. They asked him in a very reproachful way, what he meant by telling them such a dream. They said

to him, *Shalt thou, indeed, reign over us?* Shall we bow down before thee, and obey thee, as our ruler or king? How great is thy folly and pride, a mere youth as thou art, and our younger brother too, to expect that such a dream will ever come to pass!

But it was not long before Joseph had another dream, still more remarkable than this.

He dreamed that the sun, and the moon, and the eleven stars were all around him, and bowed down before him.

He told this dream to his father, and to his brethren; and they supposed that if it meant to foretell any thing, it was, that not only his brethren, whom *the eleven stars* represented, but also his father and mother, whom the *sun and moon* represented, should yet bow down before him, and obey him as their ruler or king.

Jacob, seeing that Joseph was in danger of growing proud by having such dreams, or perhaps not inclined fully to believe them as foretelling what would really happen, rebuked him: "What is this dream that thou hast dreamed?" said he. "Shall I, and thy mother, and thy brethren, indeed, come to bow down ourselves to thee, to the earth?"

Still, he could not help considering it a very remarkable dream, especially as it was so much like the first one which Joseph had; and he did not forget it.

This dream had the same effect upon the brethren of Joseph as the former one. They envied and hated him the more. They, no doubt, wished for an opportunity to do him some great injury. For envy and hatred cannot remain inactive. They are like a flame which is smothered for a little while, and then bursts out with double violence. We shall see that such was the effect of the evil passions which burned within the breasts of the brothers of Joseph.

Not long after this they were sent by their father to feed his flock in Shechem.

This place was between sixty and seventy miles north of Hebron; so that it was a considerable distance to drive the large flocks of sheep and goats which Jacob owned. But it was necessary to do this, and to go from place to place, in order to find sufficient pastures for them.

In the valley of Shechem they could find an abundance. It was "a field which the Lord had blessed."

Modern travellers speak of this part of Palestine as among the most pleasant and fertile.

The city, now called Napolose, as it is approached from the neighboring hills, appears embosomed in delightful and fragrant bowers, half hid by rich gardens, and by groves of tall trees, all around the beautiful valley in which it stands.

On the right and left are the mountains of Gerizim

and Ebal, whose lofty, craggy, and barren heights are strikingly contrasted with the rich valley beneath, and with the extensive olive grounds that are spread over its surface.

Near this place, called, in the time of our Savior, Sychar, was Jacob's Well, where, you recollect, Christ conversed with the Woman of Samaria ; and here, too, Joseph himself was buried, as we shall see at the close of his strange and eventful life.

To this delightful spot Jacob had sent his sons to find feed for his numerous and increasing flocks.

Being so far from home, it was not long before their kind father began to feel anxious about them, and directed Joseph to go and see if it was "well with them, and with the flocks, and bring him word again."

It was a long journey for such a young man to take alone, and on foot. In addition to this, he must have feared not a little, on account of the treatment which he might receive from his brethren. But his father directed him to go, and this was enough for a dutiful son. He cheerfully obeyed ; and leaving his home, in the pleasant vale of Hebron, set out for Shechem, to find his brothers, and to see if they were well.

He little knew what was before him ; through what wondrous scenes he was soon to pass ; and

how God was leading him now to take the first steps in that path which would end in his future greatness, and in the striking fulfillment of his dreams.

Little, too, did his aged father Jacob, as he gave Joseph his parting blessing, think of the sorrows which were soon to come upon him; and that many long, long years would pass by before he should again see this dutiful and beloved son.

They bade each other farewell in peace. What trials each must endure before they shall meet in peace again!

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## CHAPTER V.

Joseph approaches his brethren.—Their great wickedness in designing to take his life.—Sin is the cause of misery.—It is the greatest of evils.—To what it leads if not repented of.

JOSEPH at length arrived at Shechem. As he was walking about the fields and endeavoring to find his brethren, a stranger met him and inquired what he was looking after. He replied, "I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks."

“ And the man said, They are departed hence ; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan.”

Dothan was still farther north, and more than twenty miles from Shechem. Hither Joseph immediately proceeded, and found the place where his brethren were.

He was, doubtless, glad to arrive at the end of his journey, and hoped soon to be able to return to his beloved father with the good news of his brethren's welfare.

They saw him approaching at a very considerable distance ; and how do you think they felt as they caught the first sight of his person, and were sure that it was indeed their brother Joseph ? Were they rejoiced that they should now hear from home, and learn how their venerable father did, and all his family, who were with him ?

You imagine, probably, that *you* would have felt so had you been in their circumstances. Alas ! you know very little of the deceitfulness and of the wickedness of the human heart ! I told you to what envy and hatred, if not repented of and overcome, will lead. You will now see that I told you the truth.

Neither their absence from home, nor the innocent and pleasant occupation in which they were engaged, had any effect to soften their feelings and



lead them to forget what they considered the injuries which both Joseph and their father had done them.

They had been wandering in the delightful valley of Shechem, breathing its balmy air, viewing its beautiful and sublime scenes, feeding their flocks in its green pastures, and beside its cooling streams, and reclining under its refreshing shades, with abundant time for calm and serious thought.

How favorable every thing was to their repenting of their late bitter resentment toward their brother ! How much their peaceful employment, the goodness of God toward them, and his tender mercies shown forth in all the works of his hands around them ; how much all this ought to have affected their hearts with gratitude to their heavenly Father, and with good will to their fellow-men !

It was far otherwise. The first glimpse which they caught of Joseph, perhaps descending a distant hill, and wearing still the beautiful garment given to him by his father, kindled up all the evil passions which were slumbering in their breasts.

His dreams came to their remembrance, on account of which, above all other things, they hated him so bitterly. “ And they said one to another, *Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now, therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit ; and we*

*will say, some evil beast hath devoured him : and we shall see what will become of his dreams."*

Pride, envy, hatred—these were the wicked passions which led them thus to propose to each other to take the life of their own brother.

Their *pride* was sorely wounded ; because, if the dreams of Joseph should come to pass, they would have to acknowledge him as their ruler or king. How could they submit to such a degradation—they the elder, to bow down before the younger brother !

Their *envy* was greatly excited. They recollected all the fondness which Jacob their father had shown for Joseph. They saw him still wearing the garment which was the mark of that fondness, and of his superiority to them. They knew that he deserved this distinction, because his character and conduct were so much better than theirs. They longed to see him deprived of all that he had and enjoyed, as if this would increase their own happiness.

Their *hatred* was roused to the highest degree. They were ready to do Joseph any evil, however great. They were ready to take his life.

I have dwelt a little on this part of the history, that I may lead you to think very seriously of *what sin is*.

You see it, and how dreadful it appears, in the

wicked thoughts and feelings of Joseph's brethren.

Have you ever considered your own wicked thoughts and feelings, which you have often had and kept to yourself, or which have sometimes been shown in your conversation and conduct? Have you thought how they must have appeared in the sight of God, who has seen and known them all?

If you have never yet truly repented of your sins ; and besought God, for Christ's sake, to forgive you ; and prayed for the Holy Spirit, that you may have strength given you to get rid of all sin ; then you are in the same dreadful condition in which the brethren of Joseph were. Sin was their master ; and *sin is your master*. What I mean by this is, that, while you remain impenitent, you will yield to and obey your wicked passions and desires. They will rule over you, and will lead you continually to say and to do one wicked thing and another, till you know not how great your wickedness may become.

You may think that your sins now are very small. But it is not a small thing to break the commands of the great, the good, and the just God. He is your *kind friend*. A thankful heart should lead you to remember all his kindness, and to love and obey him. *He made you*. You are *his property*. He has a *right* to your love and obedience. And, beside all this, it is by your loving and obeying him that he

wishes you to do all you can *to make both others and yourself happy*. For, just as the love and obedience of children to kind and good parents, makes themselves and all the family happy, as you well know is the case; so love and obedience to the kind and good father of all, would make all the beings in his great family happy.

Sin is the great cause of misery among all beings; just as you know disobedience to parents, and wicked conduct, are the cause of wretchedness in families.

No sins should be called small. If you do not repent of your sins, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved, by him, from your sins, as well as from the punishment which they deserve; all your wicked thoughts and feelings will be increasing *in number and in strength*, as you grow older.

What a sad prospect! Where will such a course of sinning end? What may it not lead you to do, even in this life! Whither will it lead you, in the world to come!

“The wages of sin is death; the death—the eternal death of the soul; its being shut out for ever from the joys of heaven; its being sentenced to that place of awful wickedness and suffering, where “the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched!”

## CHAPTER VI.

Reuben pleads for Joseph's life.—Joseph cast into a pit.—  
His brethren hard-hearted.—Judah pleads for Joseph's  
life.—He is sold to the Ishmaelites, and carried to Egypt.  
—The providence of God.

AND are the brethren of Joseph about to kill their brother? All but one have it in their hearts to do this wicked deed. They are planning the mode of doing it, and in what way they will prevent its discovery, and make their father believe that Joseph was devoured by some wild beast. They are talking of slaying him, and of then casting the body into some deep pit, where it will never be seen by any human eye. They are all ready to gratify their wicked passions of pride, envy, and hatred.

But God will not permit it to be done. He has great things for Joseph yet to do, and his life must be spared. There is one of the brothers not so cruel as the rest. It is Reuben, the eldest. God awakens his conscience to see the dreadful wickedness of what they are about to do, and softens his heart to feel for his brother and aged father. He begs them not to kill Joseph, and advises them to cast him into a deep pit that was near by. This he does, thinking

that their rage against him is so great that they will not let him entirely escape, and hoping to find an opportunity afterward of rescuing his brother, and of restoring him to Jacob.

The other brothers are persuaded to follow the advice of Reuben. They probably perceive that if they proceed actually to kill Joseph, Reuben will have nothing to do with it, and that he will tell the whole affair to their father.

But now Joseph is approaching his brethren, ready to show his affection for them—to tell them of their father's welfare, and to inquire kindly after them.



What is his surprise and alarm, as they seize him roughly and strip him of his beautiful garment of various colors, and cast him into a deep pit ; and leave him there, wondering and trembling, not knowing what they intend yet to do with him. Perhaps they will soon come again, he thinks, to take his life ; or, probably, they mean to leave him there, to perish with hunger.

And what do his brethren do ? They sit down on the green grass to eat their food, as if nothing had happened. Who would think that they could do this so quietly and comfortably, and so directly after their cruel treatment of their brother ?

But sin hardens the heart. Hate produces cruelty. And even the children of the same father, when they become envious of each other, will soon be prepared to act toward each other more like wild and ferocious animals than like human beings.

Who are those seen at a distance travelling on camels, and coming near the spot where the brethren of Joseph are still seated on the ground ?

They are a company of Ishmaelites and Midianites, who have been to a country east of Dothan, called Gilead, where they have bought some of the very precious things that are produced there—spices, balm, and myrrh—and are now going a great way to another country, called Egypt, to sell these

articles to the people who live there, and who are very fond of using them.

This is all directed by God, who so ordered it that these travelling merchants should pass by just at this time, that it might be the means of saving Joseph's life, and of bringing about the exact fulfillment of his dreams.

Another brother begins to feel a little for poor Joseph. It is Judah, the fourth son. He says to his brethren, "What good will it do us to kill our brother? We may do it in such a way, indeed, as never to have it known, but it will be of no benefit to us. Why should we wish to kill him? Let us not do it. He is our brother, the son of the same father. Let us spare his life, and sell him to those merchants, who will soon be here. They will carry him far enough off to prevent him from ever troubling us again with his foolish dreams, or pretending to expect to be a ruler over us."

Judah prevails with the rest, and they go and draw Joseph out of the pit, hungry, and trembling, and dreading what their cruel hands may do unto him.

The Ishmaelites approach, and after bargaining with them about the price, just as if they were parting with a sheep or a goat, his brothers sell Joseph, in spite of his tears and entreaties, to these strangers,



for twenty pieces of silver: and they carry him off with them away to Egypt.



That was *the very place* to which God intended that Joseph should go. His wicked brethren did not know this. They had no idea that their cruel treatment of him would be *the very means* of defeating their own designs, and of preparing the way for their future shame and humiliation before their injured brother.

God over-ruled their wicked designs so as to bring about his own good purposes. His doing this, and indeed his knowing beforehand every thing

that is to happen, and so planning and ordering what takes place, as to do just what he thinks best and right with all persons and things—is what we call *the providence of God*.

It is this providence of God which takes care of you, my dear children, and plans and orders what is to happen, and causes so many comforts and blessings to attend you.

It was this same providence of God which took care of poor Joseph. You have already seen how one thing and another were ordered, with regard to him, in a very striking manner, to bring about the wise purposes of God.

You will see the same providence of God bringing about still more wonderful things, with regard to him, in the country of Egypt, whither he has gone, far away from his kind father, to be sold as a slave in a land of strangers.

## CHAPTER VII.

Reuben's sorrow at finding Joseph gone.—Joseph's brethren lead their father to believe that he is dead.—Their great guilt.—The commission of sin leads to deception and falsehood.

REUBEN, who proposed to put Joseph in the pit that he might save his life and return him to his father, was absent when he was sold to the Ishmaelites. He returned soon after, and going to the pit, found that Joseph was not there. His disappointment and grief at this were very great. He rent his clothes. It was customary at that time for persons in that country to do this, as a mark of deep sorrow; and Reuben probably intended in this way to let his brethren see how keenly he felt the loss of his brother. He came to his brethren, and broke out in this affecting lamentation: *The child is not—and I, whither shall I go?*

Reuben was soon told what his brethren had done with Joseph; and he saw that it was too late for him to attempt any thing for his relief. For, had he pursued the Ishmaelites, it is not at all probable that they would have given up Joseph, even if the money had been given back to them again. It is

doubtful, too, whether Reuben had money enough of his own for this purpose; and we cannot suppose that his brethren would let him have the twenty pieces of silver to defeat their own design in selling their brother.

They had now to devise some way of concealing their guilt, so that their father and his family might be kept in ignorance of it, and of what had become of Joseph.

One sin is the cause of another. They had done the greatest injury to their unoffending brother, and some deception must be practised by which to impose upon their aged parent.

It is uncertain whether Reuben was concerned with them or not, in the deception. But, at any rate, he did not make it known, and in this way partook of their guilt, and showed that he was afraid to do his duty.

The deception which they practised was this. They killed a kid or young goat, and dipped the beautiful coat of Joseph in its blood. They then brought it to their father and showed it to him all bloody as it was. "We have found it," said they; "know now whether it be thy son's coat or no."

"And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat, an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is, without doubt, rent in pieces."

What an affliction to Jacob! He could not have had a severer one. Rachel, whom he loved so tenderly, was gone. He buried her at Ephrath. And now, the next dearest object of his affection, the son whom he hoped to have as the support and solace of his already declining years, is also gone. It would have been a consolation to have laid him in his grave. But this is denied him.

In the bitterness of his grief, Jacob rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth, and mourned for his son many days.

“And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son, mourning. Thus his father wept for him.”

Jacob's sons, trying to comfort him for the loss of Joseph, whom they themselves had sold into bondage, and sent far away from his affectionate father! *They* pretending to mingle their sorrow with his, when they were secretly rejoicing at the event which occasioned it! *They* endeavoring to allay his grief, when the deception which they had practised was the reason why that grief was so excessive! *They* calling upon him to dry up his tears, when they had it in their power, by simply telling him that Joseph was yet alive, to furnish a consolation

which would have turned those tears of sadness into tears of joy !

What base deceivers ! What wicked hypocrites ! What ungrateful and cruel children ! How is their guilt increasing ; and how great must be the displeasure of God against them !

You see in all this your own danger, if you go on indulging sinful thoughts and feelings, and committing sinful actions. Stop and think of this danger. Think especially of one striking thing which marked the progress of Joseph's brethren in guilt. I mean their resort to deception and falsehood.

Remember that those who are guilty of wicked conduct, wish and strive to conceal it. Have you not always found it to be so, when you have said or done any thing which you knew to be wrong ?

But those who wish to conceal their evil conduct are strongly tempted to do this by some kind of artifice, or even by a downright falsehood.

You know it is a common saying, that *those who steal, will also lie*. It is true—and it is equally true, that those who commit wickedness, of whatever kind, will practise deception, and tell a falsehood rather than be detected.

How mean and cowardly, as well as sinful, it is, *to be a liar* ! “ Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but they that deal truly are his delight. Liars

shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."

Fear then to sin. Fear all wicked thoughts, and feelings, and conduct. For these will lead you to deceive, and if, in your opinion, there is great danger of detection—to lie.

There is no security against this, but in loving and obeying God. Have you a heart thus disposed to love and obey him? If you have not—think of the sons of Jacob. Think of their very wicked conduct toward their brother and father. It all proceeded from *their evil hearts*.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

Joseph sold to Potiphar.—His history given to us, to show us the providence of God.—Potiphar's great regard for Joseph.—Duties to others to be performed in the fear of God.

It was a long journey of several hundred miles, from Dothan, the place where Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelites, to Egypt, the country to which they carried him.

You had better get some one to show you these places on the map; and also Mesopotamia, from

which Jacob came with his family; and Hebron, where he found his father Isaac, and where he lived; and also Shechem, or Sychar, where the brothers of Joseph were keeping the flocks, when he was sent to inquire after them.

Egypt was a large country in Africa, directly west of the Red Sea. It contained a great many people, and was governed by kings who were called by a name, meaning the same as king, *Pharaoh*.

These kings were very powerful. They had many soldiers under them, whom they could command to do as they pleased, and this made the people fear and obey them.

They kept some of these soldiers always near them, about their house and person; and they were called *the king's guard*. They defended the king against any one who might wish to take his life, or do him an injury. Beside this, they were the persons who put to death those whom the king sentenced to die on account of any crime; or, as was sometimes the case, because he feared them, or was angry with them. The king's guard was commanded by a captain or officer, such as you have seen at the head of a company of soldiers; and at the time when Joseph was carried into Egypt the name of this captain of the guard was Potiphar.

He was a rich and powerful man, one of the great-



est in the whole country, next to the king. He had a large house, and much land, and many persons under him, to do his work.

It was Potiphar, this captain of the king's guard, to whom the Ishmaelites sold Joseph soon after their arrival in Egypt. We do not know what price they got for him. But it was undoubtedly a good deal more than the twenty pieces of silver which they paid to his brothers. For they bought him to make money of him, just as people do of any thing that they buy to sell again.

Poor Joseph! thus to be sold twice as a slave; and now to a strange master, in a strange land; hundreds of miles from home, from his father, and family, and friends!

But there is reason to believe that he put his trust in God, and prayed to him, and looked up unto him for protection and guidance. And God did protect, and guide, and bless Joseph, as you will see. You will see, too, how it was again ordered by *the providence of God*, that Joseph should be sold to this very captain of the king's guard, in order to bring about the design of God, and the exact fulfillment of Joseph's dreams.

I wish, my dear children, that you would keep continually in mind this over-ruling providence of God, as we go along in the history of Joseph. For

this is one important reason why God has given us this history in the Bible ; and when you come to read about the descendants of Jacob, *the Israelites* ; and what a great and powerful nation they became ; and how Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, was born among this people, and was one of them, himself a descendant of Abraham, the grandfather of Jacob ; you will find more strange and wonderful things, connected with *the simple fact of Joseph's being sold in Egypt*, than you can now imagine. You will find that God, by his providence—his planning, ordering, and directing all events—is, truly, great in counsel and mighty in work ; and you will be ready to exclaim, as Moses did, “ Who is like unto thee, O Lord ; who is like thee ; glorious in holiness ; fearful in praises ; doing wonders ? ”

Joseph had not been long with Potiphar before the latter began to notice that he was a very industrious servant, and that he was faithful and upright in all his conduct. He had some kind of labor to do in the house of his master, who saw that Joseph succeeded exceedingly well in doing it ; and that the business in the family which was entrusted to his care was managed with great skill and wisdom. The Bible, in speaking of this, says, “ his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand.”

There was something in Joseph's conversation and conduct which showed that he feared the true God, and which led Potiphar to notice it, and to respect him on this account.

My dear children, pray to God to give you his Holy Spirit, that you may be led to imitate this example of Joseph.

You are called upon to perform certain duties, in obedience to the commands of your parents, or of other persons who have the care of you.

Whatever you thus do, do it in the fear of God ; because *he commands* you to do your duty ; because *his eye* is always upon you ; and because, if you thus love and serve him, he will be your constant protector and friend, as he was of Joseph.

## CHAPTER IX.

Joseph made overseer of Potiphar's house.—He is tempted to great wickedness by Potiphar's wife.—He fears to sin against God.—He is falsely accused, and cast into prison.—His good conduct there.—He has the whole care of the prison.—The great happiness of having *God with us*.

JOSEPH conducted so well in every thing with which he was entrusted, that Potiphar continued to place more and more things under his care; and at length his confidence in him was so great, that he made him “overseer over his house; and all that he had he put into his hand.”

Joseph was now at the head of the whole of Potiphar's business. Both in the house and in the field he directed all the persons whom Potiphar employed, to do as he wished; and so entirely did he have the management and oversight of every thing, that, we are told in the Bible, Potiphar knew not even the different kinds of property which he owned, except the food which he saw on his table. Every thing was provided for himself and the family, without any care of his own, by the skill and industry of Joseph.

In the midst of so much prosperity, Joseph did not forget that he was indebted for it all to the kind pro-

vidence of God. He continued to fear and obey God; and I think so, because he, soon after, was severely tried, and tempted to do evil, but resisted the temptation, and showed that he dreaded more than any thing else, to sin against God.

It was the wife of Potiphar who tempted Joseph to sin. She was a very wicked woman, and began to love Joseph, *as if he were her husband*. She had a husband already, and she knew how sinful it was to think of having Joseph for her husband, and to try to persuade him to love her *as his wife*.

For any married man or woman to do so, with regard to any other person *who is not married to them*, you know, is to break the seventh commandment of God, which says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

This means, that a married man shall not live with any woman, *as his wife*, excepting the one to whom he is married: and that a married woman shall not live with any other man, *as her husband*, excepting the one to whom she is married.

Whoever does this, or, as our Savior teaches us, *even wishes to do so*, has committed adultery, and is a very great sinner in the sight of God.

Potiphar's wife endeavored to persuade Joseph thus to sin against God, by violating one of his commands, in the commission of very great wickedness.

Her attempts were in vain; for Joseph was firm in his obedience to God. "How can I do this great wickedness," said he, "and sin against God!"

The love of Potiphar's wife was turned into hatred, and she sought to do Joseph all the injury she could. She told her husband a very wicked falsehood respecting him. She accused him of wishing to have *her as his wife*, and Potiphar believed it. His anger was roused to a very great degree. He determined to have Joseph in his house no longer. He resolved to inflict a severe punishment upon him; and he caused him to be shut up in prison.

It was the same prison in which those persons were confined who had offended against the king, or broken some of his laws. We read in the Bible, that they *were bound*; so that it is probable Joseph was also in bonds, wearing them on his arms and legs, and shut up in a gloomy cell or dungeon.

What a change for this poor young man! To be taken from the height of prosperity, at the accusation of a false and wicked woman, and, innocent as he was, to lose the favor of Potiphar, and be cast into prison, without any one to be his defender and friend!

But if he had no human friend, he had *an Almighty one*. God watched over him for good. Indeed, it was God himself, by his wise providence, who so overruled the designs of Potiphar's wife to injure

Joseph, that his being cast into prison by her husband was the very means of his future prosperity and greatness, and of the exact fulfillment of his dreams.

Many persons, if they were treated as Joseph was ; sold by his own brothers ; a stranger in a distant land ; accused falsely of a great crime ; in prison, and in bonds ; would murmur and complain, and think that God was unkind and unjust, in permitting them to endure such sufferings.

But Joseph did not feel so. He was not made proud by prosperity ; and now, in adversity, he was humble and patient.

The keeper of the prison noticed how he felt and conducted ; and God, who can influence the hearts of all men, inclined the heart of the keeper to show Joseph great favor and kindness. So much so, that he entrusted him with the government of the prisoners, and, indeed, with the entire management of the prison.

This was a new and difficult situation for a person so young as Joseph. He is supposed, at this time, to have been twenty seven years of age. But, his wisdom was great for his years, and his uprightness and firmness were equally so.

He conducted the affairs of the prison with so much judgment, that we are told, in the Bible, "the

keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand, (that is, the hand of Joseph,) because the Lord was with him; and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper."

*The Lord was with him.* What a privilege! You think it a great comfort to have your father or mother with you, especially when you are in difficulty, in trouble, or in sickness, and feel the need of some one to advise you, and take care of you. How often their presence has calmed your fears and soothed your sorrows. How have you leaned on them for support, when you felt how feeble *you were*, and ignorant of what was best to be done!

You have a Father in heaven, who is all-wise and all-powerful! He wishes you to feel toward him as children ought to do toward so kind and powerful a benefactor. He wishes you to love and obey him. He tells you, in the Bible, what you must do to please him, and to make others and yourself good and happy. He, first of all, requires that you should be heartily sorry for all your sins, and forsake them, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to save you. He invites you to pray to him for the Holy Spirit, to lead you to do what he requires; and he promises, if you will thus pray, to give you this Spirit.

Will you go to this heavenly Father, sorry for your sins and confessing them all; and beseeching



him, for Christ's sake, to forgive you, and to grant you the Holy Spirit, that you may be led to love and obey him ?

*Then the Lord will be with you*, as he was with Joseph. He will do a great deal more for you than ever your father, or mother, or any earthly friend has done.

*He will be with you*, having you under the peculiar care of his providence ; guiding and protecting you ; guarding you against temptation in prosperity ; supporting you under trials in adversity ; making all things work together for your good ; and, at last, taking you to heaven, to be with him and his Son, and the spirits of the redeemed, where all are, for ever, free from sin and sorrow, and going on improving in knowledge, and increasing in goodness and happiness.

## CHAPTER X.

The fear of God—what it is—its benefits.—The dream of the chief butler.—Its interpretation by Joseph.

PERHAPS you have wondered that so young a man as Joseph, and a stranger too, should so soon, while a servant in the one case, and a prisoner in the other, gain the entire confidence of Potiphar, and of the jailor.

There is one simple reason for it; *he feared God.*

Wherever he was, and whatever he was doing, he remembered that the eye of God was upon him, and that he would have to render an account to God of all his conduct.

You have seen a striking instance of this, when Potiphar's wife tempted him to sin. *How can I do this great wickedness,* said he, *and sin against God.*

You will find nothing so effectual to keep *you* also from falling into sin, and to strengthen you in the performance of duty, as *this fear of God.*

It is a fear mingled with love; such a fear as an affectionate and dutiful child has, of offending the parent who is tender and yet firm, kind and yet strict, in the government of his family.

Study your Bible, and make it your great concern to learn *who God is*. Find out all that you can of his greatness and goodness; and you will see what reason you have both to fear and to love so glorious and kind a being.

Pray that you may fear and love him, and have a deep feeling of his presence, and of your accountability to him, for all that you think, and say, and do. Then, like Joseph, you will be under the constant protection of God. Wicked persons will see what it is that leads you to do right, and they will respect you for it; and good persons will love you; and you will be taking the only sure way, as Joseph did, whether you are in prosperity or in adversity, of gaining the esteem and confidence of all.

We shall see these truths still further illustrated in the history of Joseph.

Not long after he began to have the management of the prison, there were two persons brought there, of whom I will give you some account.

One was the chief butler of the king of Egypt. He probably had the care of the wine which the king used, and when the king drank it, handed the cup to him. Sometimes he would take the fine ripe grapes, and press the juice into the cup, and give it to the king to drink. It was common for the kings in Egypt, and in Asia, in ancient times, to

have such cup-bearers, and the office was considered one of great honor.

The other person who was brought to the prison was the king's chief baker, who had the oversight of those who prepared his bread and other kinds of food. His office, too, was a very respectable one. Indeed, we have reason to conclude that both these persons were of high rank; for an ancient historian, Diodorus Siculus, who has written about the Egyptians, tells us that the officers of the kings (such as the chief butler, or cup-bearer, and the chief baker,) were selected from the most distinguished families of the priesthood, and were among the nobles.

It seems that these officers of the king had, in some way, offended him. He was so enraged at their conduct that he put them into the prison in which Joseph was, being a part of the house of Potiphar the captain of the guard, and probably under his general superintendence.

Potiphar charged Joseph with the care of the chief butler and chief baker, and he saw that they were placed in confinement, and provided with such things as were allowed to prisoners in their situation.

After having been in prison some time, these two men had each of them a dream the same night, which led them to wonder at it not a little, and to feel very

sorrowful. The next morning, when Joseph came in to see them, as he usually did, to find out whether every thing was as it should be, he observed that something had happened, and that they looked sad. He inquired the reason of it, and they told him that they had had two dreams which troubled them very much ; and the more so, because there was no one who could interpret the dreams, or explain their meaning, and what they might foretell.

“ Joseph said unto them, do not *interpretations belong to God?* Tell me them, I pray you.”

It would seem, from this, that Joseph, who had had some very remarkable dreams himself, was one of those that in former times were enabled by God to explain the meaning of dreams, and to tell what future events they predicted.

The chief butler told Joseph his dream. It was the following : He dreamed that he saw a grape-vine before him, which had three branches. The buds grew, and the blossoms shot forth so rapidly that it produced clusters of ripe grapes in a few moments of time. The king's cup was in his hand, into which, after plucking them, he pressed the juice of the grapes, and gave the cup to the king.

Joseph gave him this interpretation of his dream. He said that the three branches represented three days, and that within three days the king would

*lift up his head*, and restore him to his former place, and that he should again be the cup-bearer of the king, and hand him his wine to drink.

*To lift up the head*, was a manner of speaking at that time, and afterward, among the Jews, the meaning of which was, to raise a person to some kind of honor, so that others would treat him with respect, or to restore him to an office which he had before held.

The chief butler was greatly rejoiced at this explanation of his dream, and that he should so soon be removed from his uncomfortable and disgraceful confinement, and experience again the friendship of the king.

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## CHAPTER XI.

The dream of the chief baker and its interpretation.—What Joseph foretells, comes to pass.—Prophecy.—Sin of ingratitude.

WE do not read in the Bible that the chief butler expressed any thanks to Joseph for the interpretation of his dream; and we shall find out, afterward, that he was not a man likely to do this.

Joseph, however, asked one favor of him, when he should be restored to his office, and enjoy again the opportunity of being often with the king.

“Think on me,” said he, “when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me; and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: for, indeed, I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here, also, I have done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.”

I will just tell you, as we go along, that the word *dungeon* here, or rather the word in the Hebrew language, (in which the Old Testament was written,) means any place of confinement. So that Joseph only said that he was in prison. He was not in bonds at that time, nor shut up close in any room or cell.

Afterward the chief baker told *his dream*. He had some hopes, from the favorable interpretation which Joseph gave of that of his companion in misfortune, that his, also, might foretell good.

He said he dreamed that he had three white baskets on his head, and that, in the uppermost basket, there was all manner of baked meats for the king. He also dreamed that the birds came and ate the meat out of the basket.

No doubt he waited, with great anxiety, to hear what interpretation Joseph would give of the dream.

“The three baskets,” said Joseph, “denote three days, and within that time the king will lift up thy head from off thee, and hang thee on a tree, (or high gibbet, or gallows,) and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.”

This was a sad interpretation of his dream to the chief baker; but we are not told the particular effect which it had upon him.

The third day after Joseph gave these interpretations of the dreams, was Pharaoh's birth-day. It was a day of much rejoicing in the king's house, and he made a great feast for all his officers, and captains, and persons who did his business and waited on him. In the midst of this festivity he ordered the chief butler to be set at liberty and restored to his former situation. On that same day he became again the king's cup-bearer, and gave the cup of wine into his hand.

On that same day, also, the chief baker was hung, and his body left on the gallows, to be devoured by the birds of heaven.

Thus Joseph proved to be a true interpreter of the dreams which were told him; which shows that it was God who instructed him how to make the interpretations. For no one but God, or some person to whom he sees fit to communicate it, has any certain knowledge of future events.



There are many prophecies in the Bible, made before the things which they predicted came to pass. The fulfillment of these prophecies, or, what means the same thing, *the coming to pass of the things that were foretold*, shows, that the prophecies must have come from God, and that the Bible, which contains these prophecies, also came from God, and is all true.

We are told, that after being restored to his office, the chief butler did not remember Joseph. He quite forgot all his kindness to him while under his care in the prison; the relief and joy which were afforded him in the interpretation of his dream; and the request which Joseph made, that he would mention his case, the circumstances of his history, and especially his innocence, to the king.

This forgetfulness shows the great ingratitude of the chief butler, and how little feeling he had for others, if he himself could only be delivered from trouble and suffering.

Alas! how many such persons there are in the world, eager after their own happiness, unmindful of that of others! Children, too, sometimes forget their own parents, and all their kindness; and neglect them in sickness, or in old age; and show what ungrateful and wicked hearts they have!

Can it be, my dear children, that this is true of any

of you? Think a little. Are you truly grateful to your parents? Do you remember all their past kindness to you? Do you love and obey them? Do you do all that you can to make them happy?

Hear what God says on this subject, in the Bible, and may it sink deep into your hearts.

“Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother, and all the people shall say, Amen.”

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## CHAPTER XII.

Pharaoh's dreams.—He sends for Joseph.—Joseph's humility.—We should not receive the approbation which is due to others, or which we do not deserve.

ABOUT two years after the chief butler was restored to his office, and while Joseph, forgotten by him, was still in prison, Pharaoh had two very singular dreams on the same night.

He dreamed that he was walking by the side of the river Nile, and saw seven fat and good-looking cows come up out of the river, and feed in the meadows near its banks. Seven others, miserably poor, and disagreeable in their appearance, came up also

out of the river, and stood near the fat ones. And, strange to behold, they soon attacked the fat ones, and entirely devoured them. But notwithstanding this, they seemed just as poor and ill-looking as before.

The king awoke, but soon fell asleep again, and had another dream quite as strange as the first one.

He dreamed that he saw seven ears of grain grow out of one stalk, all full and good; and that immediately after, seven other ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up, and devoured the full ones.

Pharaoh was much troubled, the next morning, on account of these dreams. For he thought that probably they had some meaning which it was very important for him to understand.

So he sent for all the magicians of Egypt, and for all the wise men, to see if they could interpret his dreams, which he related to them.

These magicians and wise men were persons who pretended, in some strange way, to explain dreams, and foretell future events; though they knew, at the time, it was all a deception. But, often as they had imposed upon others, and made some sort of guessing about what their dreams meant, they did not dare to run the risk of trying to interpret those of the king.

So they confessed that they were entirely at a loss to know what his strange dreams meant, and he was in greater perplexity than ever.

It was now that, for the first time, the chief butler thought of Joseph, and remembered his request, that he would mention him to the king.

He seemed to have some faint emotions of gratitude waked up within his bosom. For, after having said to the king, "I do remember my faults this day," he went on to state the circumstances of Joseph's interpreting his dream and that of the chief baker, when they were confined in prison.

The king was much struck with the account, and with the wisdom of Joseph in understanding so exactly what the dreams predicted; and he ordered Joseph to be brought immediately before him.

Having prepared himself in a neat and suitable manner, Joseph went to the king's dwelling, and was introduced into his presence.

He told Joseph about his dreams and that none were able to interpret them, and observed, at the same time, "I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream, to interpret it."

The king supposed that it was by his own skill that Joseph could do this; in some such way as the magicians and wise men often pretended to do it. He knew not the true God, and that he alone, or the

persons whom he instructed, could look into futurity, and foretell what was to happen.

Joseph might have let the king continue to think so, and thus have acquired great honor and praise, in his estimation, and in that of all his officers, and the Egyptians. But *he feared God*. He did not dare to let others think that it was by his own wisdom he could interpret dreams, when he knew that it was God alone who enabled him to do it, and that, therefore, *God should have all the glory*.

“And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying; It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.”

*It is not in me.* Remember this saying of Joseph. It sometimes happens that others may think *you* have done some good thing, when, in truth, somebody else did it. Or, you may have more praise for doing a thing than you really deserve; for somebody else may have helped you to do it. Or, you may be supposed to know something, when you are really quite ignorant about it. You are tempted to let others think more highly of you than they ought, and to have your vanity gratified; and thus to be the means of depriving some one else of the esteem, or praise, that is justly his due.

I have often seen this among children in a family, and among pupils at school.

It is all wrong. It is a violation of the tenth commandment, which forbids us *to covet* what belongs to another. It is a violation of the eighth commandment, which forbids us *to steal*. For it is truly a kind of theft, a secretly taking away from another that to which he is justly entitled.

When you find yourself tempted to do so, remember the example and saying of Joseph. Frankly state the exact truth about the matter. Say, *it is not in me*. Tell just how much you did, and how much you did *not* do ; how much you know, and how much you do *not* know ; how much you were aided by others, and how much is fairly due to them.

Remember, that although you may, at such a time, deceive your fellow-men, (as Joseph, had he chosen, might have deceived Pharaoh,) you cannot deceive God. For he knows *what is in you* ; your most secret thoughts and feelings, as well as all your conversation and conduct.

“Think not more highly of yourselves than you ought to think. In lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.”

“God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.”

## CHAPTER XIII.

Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams.—Pharaoh makes him governor of Egypt.—Joseph's new name.—His marriage.—A regard to truth and duty the surest way of securing the confidence of others.

AFTER Pharaoh had related his dreams to Joseph, the latter replied ; " The dream of Pharaoh is one ; God hath showed Pharaoh what he is about to do."



Joseph then went on to explain the dreams particularly, and to show what they denoted.

Both the seven good kine, and the seven good ears of grain, represented seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt. During this period the earth would bring forth every thing in rich abundance, and much more than would be necessary for all the people, and for the animals which they kept.

The devouring of the seven good kine by the seven poor ones, and of the seven full ears by the seven withered ones, denoted that the seven years of plenty would be succeeded by seven others of famine; that the earth, during this period, would yield little or nothing; that the want of food would be very grievous; and that whatever could be spared from the abundance of the preceding seven years, would all be consumed during those of famine.

Joseph then added, that the foretelling of these events by two similar dreams, was to show that God would certainly bring it all to pass, and in a short space of time.

In concluding, Joseph advised Pharaoh to appoint officers who should have authority throughout the whole country, to take one fifth part of the crops during the seven plenteous years, and lay it up in store-houses in the different cities. Then, during the seven years of famine, there would be a



supply for the people, and they would not perish with hunger.

This advice of Joseph was much approved by the king, and by those who assisted him in carrying on his government; and he observed that he thought a better man to conduct the whole business could not be found than Joseph—in whom, said he, *the Spirit of God is*.

“And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art. Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.”

After saying this, Pharaoh took off the beautiful and costly ring which he wore, and put it on Joseph's finger, and had him clad in garments of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck. All this was to show the great authority which the king conferred upon Joseph, and the respect with which he was to be treated.

He also ordered Joseph to ride in the second chariot, next his own, and they cried before him, *Bow the knee*; and he was made ruler over all the land of Egypt, with authority of a very absolute kind, and second only to that of the king.

In addition to this, Pharaoh gave Joseph a new name. This was an ancient custom among the eastern nations, when the kings chose any one, and especially a foreigner, to be high in office and honor.

The name which was thus given to Joseph, was *Zaphnath-paaneah*.

There is a difference of opinion with regard to the meaning of this name. Some think that it means, *a revealer of secrets*, and that it was given to Joseph on account of the great wisdom which he discovered in the interpretation of the dreams, and of his spirit of prophecy in foretelling future events.

Others think that it was an Egyptian word, meaning, *Savior of the world*, a high-sounding title, (such as eastern nations are very fond of using,) to shew the great good which a man of Joseph's character would do to the whole nation.

Pharaoh also provided him a wife from a very distinguished family. Her name was Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah, priest, or prince, of On, which was a famous city in Egypt, over which, and the adjoining country, it is probable he was the ruler.

In this elevation of Joseph to such great authority and honor, it is worthy of particular notice that Pharaoh approved of him, because the *Spirit of*

*God was in him*; and that he considered his advice so discreet and wise, because *God had instructed him*.

Pharaoh knew, indeed, little, or nothing, of the true God in whom Joseph believed; but he saw something very striking in the character and conduct of this young Hebrew. He heard Joseph say, *It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace*. He respected Joseph for this, and felt the greatest confidence in him.

Remember that nothing gains the respect and confidence of others, and even of the most wicked men, so surely as a strict regard to truth, and to the obligations which we owe to God.

Let those with whom you have any thing to do, see that you fear God, and intend to look to him for instruction and guidance in the discharge of your duty; and the more your real character is known, the more you will gain that regard and esteem which will be uniform and lasting.

*Others will be willing to trust you in the various concerns of life.*

And though you may never be called to stations of great authority and honor, as Joseph was, it will be worth a great deal to you, and a source of the highest inward satisfaction, to have this esteem and confidence of your fellow-men, in the humblest

station ; and to know that you have it, because you endeavor, with the aid of his grace, *to fear God and keep his commandments.*

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## CHAPTER XIV.

Providence of God.—Our duty to submit to it, and to trust in it.—Joseph lays up the grain.—His two sons, reasons of their names.—The famine begins.

How wonderful were the steps which raised Joseph from being the son of a husbandman in Canaan, and thirteen years in bondage, to the office of governor of Egypt, and next in authority to the king of that great country !

In looking back upon these steps, how much we have to admire the providence of God, in bringing good out of evil, and in overruling the wicked passions of man, so as to accomplish his own wise and benevolent purposes !

I refer to this subject thus often, my dear children, that it may be fresh in your minds, as we pass from one event to another in the history of Joseph. For no one truth ought to be more deeply felt by you than that of this overruling providence

of God. Study it as you read other parts of the Bible, and the histories of nations and of individuals. Study it in the history of your own lives, and in those of your friends.

If you truly love God and put your trust in him, this doctrine of his providence will be to you a source of constant comfort and support.

Knowing that nothing happens without his knowledge and permission, and that his government reaches to the smallest things as well as to the greatest, you will always feel safe under his care—just as a little child feels safe in the arms of a kind father or mother.

We are taught in the Bible, that *all things work together for good to them that love God*; all things, prosperity or adversity, health or sickness, life or death. It was so in the case of Joseph. It will be so in yours, if you do, indeed, love God, and put your trust in him. Even in this world you will find many things which at first appear very discouraging, and give you much pain and trouble, afterward so overruled by the providence of God, as to *work together* for your comfort and happiness. And if they do not, and you are still called on to endure various kinds of sufferings and trials, bear them with submission and patience. God sees that his children need such chastisements, just as a kind

father sees that his sick child needs medicine to restore him to health. These sufferings and trials, if you beseech God to give you the Holy Spirit, that you may make a wise use of them, will *do your soul good*. They will *work together* to increase your love to God, and your faith in Christ, and your imitation of his blessed example. They will prepare you for a peaceful death, and for greater happiness in heaven.

Study, then, the providence of God, and learn every day that you live to get both wisdom and comfort from it.

Joseph, himself, had still further reason to admire this providence of God, and to trust in it.

When he was made governor of Egypt he was about thirty years old. He soon entered upon the discharge of his arduous duties. He left the king and took a journey throughout the whole land.

This enabled him to see the condition of the people, and to do those things which were necessary to prepare for the seven years of famine that would be soon at hand.

During the seven years of plenty, the earth brought forth every thing in great abundance. God ordered it so, as Joseph told Pharaoh it would be. It was his kind providence which made every thing *work together*—the sunshine and rain, the

clouds, and winds, and storms; the planting of the seeds, their growing up to ripeness, and their ingathering in the time of harvest; the health and strength of the inhabitants, and their willingness and ability to labor; it was the kind providence of God which made all these things "work together," so as to produce such plenty throughout the whole land, that we are told that Joseph ga-



thered in the grain "as the sand of the sea." He began to keep an account of it, to find how many bushels there were; but it came in in such quantities that *he left off numbering it.*

He laid it up in store-houses in the cities, and doubtless, appointed suitable officers under him, to take care of it, that it might be kept in safety for the future supply of the people.

Before the years of famine came, Joseph had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

*Manasseh* is a word which means, *causing to forget*. Joseph gave this name to his eldest son, "for God," said he, - "hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house;" that is, the various trials and sufferings which I have undergone here, in Egypt, and also those which I endured while at home, from my envious and cruel brethren.

His other son, Joseph called *Ephraim*, because this word means, *made fruitful*. "For God," said he, "hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." •

It was, doubtless, a great comfort to him to be the father of these two sons, and to have a family of his own; separated, as he was, such a great distance from his father, and from all the delights and privileges of his father's house.

At length the seven years of plenty were ended, and those of famine came.

This famine extended, not only over all the land of Egypt, but through other lands. Every where else, it was very grievous, and the people found it



exceedingly difficult to procure food enough to keep them in life; but in all the land of Egypt there was enough laid up for the supply of its inhabitants.

As soon as the Egyptians began to be in great want of food, having consumed all which they themselves had laid up in their own houses, "they cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do."

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## CHAPTER XV.

The Egyptians regard Joseph as their Savior.—Jesus Christ a far better Savior.—The Egyptians buy grain of Joseph.—The famine in Canaan.—Jacob sends his sons to Egypt to buy food.

JOSEPH, at this time, must have been regarded as being, to the Egyptians, what the new name given to him by Pharaoh, probably implied. And as they bowed the knee before him in their necessity, and looked to him for the food which they and their families so much needed, and addressed him by the title of *Zaphnath-paaneah*, they might well feel that he was *their Savior*.

I do not mean, in the sense in which we call Jesus Christ *the Savior of the world* ; to save men from their sins, and the eternal death of the soul ; and to furnish them with divine truth, and the influences of the Holy Spirit, *that heavenly food* which will nourish the soul, and cause it to live for ever in a better and happier world.

Alas ! the poor, ignorant Egyptians, I fear, cared very little about their souls, or to find out how they might be saved, and how *heavenly food* was to be procured for their nourishment.

The most, if not all, that they were anxious for, was to be saved from the famine which was so dreadful ; and when they found that Joseph had the means of saving them from it, they, doubtless, looked up to him as their best friend, their great deliverer, their powerful Savior, their *Zaphnath-paaneah*.

Here I would make one single inquiry. Are *you* as willing and as ready to go to Jesus Christ, to be saved from spiritual famine, from the eternal death of the soul ; as the Egyptians were to go to Joseph, to be saved from the famine which they endured, and from the death of the mere body ? I put the question. You must think about it, and answer it.

Joseph opened all the store-houses in the different cities in which the grain had been safely laid up during the seven years of plenty, and sold it unto

the Egyptians; so that they could feed themselves and their families.

How glad many a poor, and almost starving, little boy and girl must have been, to see their father bringing the grain home, from which their mother could make them some bread!

Think of the abundance, my dear children, which *you have*, and of *the store-house* from which it all comes, the overflowing bounty of your Father who is in heaven; and show your gratitude to him by your *obedience to his commands*.

Not only the Egyptians, but people who lived in other countries where the famine prevailed, came into Egypt to buy grain of Joseph. So that, in this way, his wisdom and industry, under the guidance of God, who taught him the meaning of Pharaoh's dreams, were the means of saving the lives of a great many.

Yes; in the wonderful providence of God, Joseph was soon to be instrumental in saving the lives of his own beloved father and family, and of the very brethren who had treated him so cruelly, and of their families.

For the famine extended to Judea, the country where Jacob lived, and the people there were suffering greatly from it. In the midst of their distress, Jacob heard that grain could be bought in Egypt,

and determined to send thither for a supply. He called his sons together, and asked them why they looked one upon another in so much sadness and despondency, as if nothing could be done for their relief. He told them he had heard that grain could be procured in Egypt, and that they must go thither and buy some, to save himself, and all of them, from the death which must otherwise inevitably overtake them.

It is probable that Jacob and his family, and his sons and their families, all lived, at that time, very near each other, and that they formed, as it were, *one great family*, of which Jacob was *the patriarch*, or head. They had one common interest; and suffering together for the want of food, it was necessary to make one great and vigorous effort for their mutual relief.

It was a long journey of several hundred miles to Egypt, and it would be attended with great inconvenience for the sons of Jacob to go such a distance. But there was no other way of procuring food; and all but Benjamin concluded to go.

Benjamin was the younger brother of Joseph, and born, you recollect, just before their mother Rachel died. There were many circumstances, the recollection of which endeared the memory of Rachel to Jacob. He loved her *first*; and he loved her the

best of all his wives. He had, of course, a great fondness for *her children*; and as Joseph, as he believed, was dead, he could not bear to have Benjamin leave home, lest some injury might befall him.

It is not surprising at all, that Jacob should feel thus tenderly toward Benjamin, when we consider that he was now far advanced in life, being nearly one hundred and thirty years old. But a few years before, he had buried his father Isaac, in the cave at Machpelah, by the side of Abraham and Sarah. He was himself drawing nigh the close of life, and feeling more sensibly his feebleness, and the need of some one to comfort him, Benjamin had taken the place of Joseph in his affections, and while he mourned over the loss of the son whom he thought the wild beasts had devoured, he pressed his brother more closely to his bosom, and leaned on him as the support and consolation of his declining years.

Do you suppose that the brethren of Joseph, on their way to Egypt, thought that, as the Ishmaelites, to whom they sold him, went to that country, it was possible they might meet him there? It certainly would not be strange if some such thoughts passed through their minds; though they would expect to find him still a slave, or in some very humble station in life. Should they meet with any one, high in power and rank, who might bear even a

considerable resemblance to their brother, it is not probable that they would suspect that he was Joseph. For it would seem to them utterly impossible for one sold as a slave, and a foreigner too, in a land of strangers, to rise to such an elevation.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

His brethren bow down before Joseph.—Why he did not make himself known to them.—He puts them into prison.—He tells them they may carry grain home; but one must stay in prison till Benjamin be brought.

ON their arrival in Egypt, after making inquiry how they could procure some grain, they found that they must apply to *Zaphnath-paaneah*, who was governor over the whole land, and had the distribution and selling of the grain entirely under his own direction.

On going to the place of his residence, they were introduced into his presence. As they approached him, *they bowed down themselves before him, with their faces to the earth.* This they did, as it is still the custom to do among the nations of the east, to show the deep reverence which they felt for one whom

they thus acknowledged to be very, very high above them in rank and power.

The dream of Joseph now received its fulfillment. The sheaves of his brethren had bowed down before *his* sheaf; and now they, themselves, in like manner, bow down in his presence, and are dependent on him, to save them and their aged father, and their whole family, from perishing with hunger!

They rose up, and stood before Joseph. They had no thought whatever of his being their brother. But he knew *them*, and if he had chosen, might have taken the deepest revenge for all the injuries they had inflicted upon him.

But such was not his disposition. He knew how to return good for evil, and intended to do the greatest kindness to them, and to his aged father.

In bringing this about, however, he thought it best not to make himself, at once, known to them. He remembered his dreams, and saw now their fulfillment in part. He expected that, in the providence of God, he was to be instrumental in the accomplishment of still further wonderful events, also connected with his dreams. He seems to have wished to try his brethren, and perhaps to prepare them for a more sincere repentance for their former cruelty toward him. In addition to this, he perceived that his young-

est brother Benjamin, whom he loved so tenderly, was not among them.

He feared, perhaps, that they had conceived a dreadful hatred against him also, as being a favorite son of their father, and had possibly taken his life. He knew that, if they had done this, and if he should make any direct inquiries about Benjamin, they would not tell him the truth, but contrive some falsehood to deceive him, as they had formerly deceived their father.

For these reasons, or for some others which we do not fully understand, Joseph not only did not make himself known to his brethren, but acted toward them as if he did not know, at all, who they were.

He even put on a strange and rough manner, that he might the more effectually conceal himself and carry his plans into effect.

He asked them from what country they came. And when they said, from Canaan, to buy food, he charged them with being spies, and said that they had come to see the poverty and weakness of Egypt, that they might carry word back to some large and powerful people who wished to come and plunder the Egyptians, and perhaps to conquer them and get possession of their country.

To this the sons of Jacob replied, that they were



very far, indeed, from being spies, or from coming to Egypt with any such design.

“Nay,” said they, “my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man’s sons;” as if they had said, we do not belong to any powerful tribe or nation, but are a small number of people—a single family—under one patriarch or head. “We are true men; thy servants are no spies.”

On Joseph’s repeating his former accusation, they again replied, that they belonged to a family of twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; that the youngest was at home with their father, and that the other brother *was not*.

Whether they meant, by this latter expression, to avoid telling a downright falsehood, it may be difficult to determine. But if they did, it was a poor way of doing it. They must have known that they would be understood to say that their brother was dead; and this made it a falsehood, no matter what the language was.

Joseph still appeared wholly unwilling to believe what they said, and told them that there was one way by which he would prove whether they spoke the truth or not.

“By the life of Pharaoh,” said he, (or, as sure as Pharaoh is alive,) “ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. Send

one of you, and let him fetch your brother; and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely ye are spies."

Joseph then put them all into prison for three days. At the end of that time he said to them, "this do, and live: for I fear God. If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn (or grain) for the famine in your houses (or families:) but bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, (or be shown to be true,) and ye shall not die."

Their former guilt now rose up before them, and, although more than twenty years had elapsed since they sold their brother as a slave, the recollection of that wicked and cruel transaction began to arouse their consciences, and they felt something of the bitterness of remorse.

They saw that they were in trouble. They knew not what the result would be. They felt that all that they might suffer would be less than they deserved; and they feared that God was about to take vengeance upon them for their treatment of Joseph.

They began to express their feelings to each other. "We are verily guilty," said they, "con-

cerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, spake I not unto you, saying do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold, also, his blood is required;" (or God is about to demand of you why you exposed him, perhaps, to an untimely death; and to inflict upon you, for doing so, the severest punishment.)

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## CHAPTER XVII.

Joseph affected at what his brethren say of their guilt.—Si-  
meon chosen as the one to stay.—Joseph's brethren set  
out for Canaan with the grain.—Difference between good  
and wicked men.—To which class does the reader be-  
long? Let conscience do its work.

JOSEPH heard the conversation of his brethren, and understood it all; though they did not suppose so. For he had been speaking to them by an interpreter; who explained what Joseph said in the Egyptian language, to them in Hebrew, which was the language they spoke; and then, what they said

in Hebrew, to Joseph in Egyptian—as if he did not understand the Hebrew language. This he did, lest they might suspect who he was, if he spoke to them in their own language.

As soon as Joseph heard the conversation of his brethren he was much affected by it, and turned away from them, so that they could not see him, and wept.

What a difference between the tenderness of *his* feelings toward them, and *their* former hard-hearted cruelty toward him !

He was almost ready to tell them who he was, and to relieve them from their trouble. But he thought that this, on the whole, was not best. He wished still to try their sincerity—to know if they really spoke the truth with regard to Benjamin ; and to lead them to a deeper repentance for their guilt.

After some further conversation with them, through the interpreter, he selected Simeon as the one who should remain behind while the rest were gone to Canaan, and ordered him to be bound in their presence. This he did to let them see that Simeon was to be kept in confinement until they returned and brought back Benjamin with them.

Joseph then gave directions (without their understanding what he said) that the sacks which they

brought should all be filled with grain; and that the money which each one had paid for the grain should be put in his sack; and that they should have provisions enough to last them during their journey.



They then put the sacks of grain on their asses, and set out for Canaan; while their brother, Simeon, was taken to a place of confinement, to await their return.

You see, in that part of the history to which we have just been attending, the striking difference be-

tween good and wicked men—between Joseph who feared God and endeavored to do his duty, and his brothers, who had been full of pride, hatred, revenge and cruelty, and who had, probably, as yet, felt no true repentance for their sins, nor desire to love and obey God.

Now, to which class of persons do *you* belong? Do you resemble, in your disposition and conduct, the tender-hearted and upright Joseph, or his hard-hearted and wicked brethren? Do you fear and love God, and esteem it your greatest happiness to obey his commands, and do good to others; or, are you thinking all the time about *yourself alone*, and in what way you can do something, or get something, to gratify your *own selfish wishes*, and make *yourself happy*, without caring about *the good and happiness of others*?

You know very well to which class of persons you *ought to belong*. Your conscience tells you how much better it is for you to be like Joseph than to be like his brethren. Well, what do you mean to do, if you are not yet at all like Joseph—if you have no true love to God and trust in the Savior, and no desire to imitate his example, in obeying the will of God, and in doing good to your fellow-men? Do you mean to keep on just as you are; without repentance for sin; without faith in Christ; without hav-

ing God for your friend, and his Son for your Savior; without any preparation for death; and without any hope of happiness beyond the grave?

When the brethren of Joseph were brought into trouble, they felt as if the anger of an offended God was resting upon them, to punish them for their guilt. Conscience, after slumbering more than twenty years, awoke, and they felt its stings.

*Your past sins may not now alarm you. Your conscience may be asleep. You may not feel your guilt and danger. But God can overtake you with his judgments, even in this life; and rouse your conscience; and fill you with remorse and dread; and make you tremble before him. And in the world to come, ah! there, conscience will do its awful work most thoroughly; and the impenitent sinner, who is banished, for ever, from the presence of God and the joys of heaven, will find nothing but anguish, in looking back upon what he has been, and nothing but despair, in looking forward to what he is yet to be.*

Now, then, let your conscience do its work. Think how much, and how often, you have sinned against God. Go to him with sincere sorrow of heart, confessing your sins. Beseech him, on account of what Christ did and suffered, to pardon your sins. Trust in this Savior, as your *only Savior and hope*. Pray

for the Holy Spirit, which he died to procure, and which he promised that God would give to all who should ask for it in his name. Pray, pray for *the Holy Spirit*, that it may come down into your soul, and abide with you; that it may guide you into the knowledge of *the truths of the Bible*; that it may lead you to love these truths and obey them; that it may keep you penitent for sin, and looking to Christ continually, to be saved from the power of sin; that it may make you faithful in serving God and doing good to your fellow-men while you live, and prepared, when you die, still to love and serve God, and to enjoy his favor and that of his Son, in a better and happier world.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

One of Joseph's brethren finds his money in the sack.—All are in great alarm.—A guilty conscience.—Jacob's distress at what his sons tell him.—Reuben's foolish and wicked speech.—Jacob cannot let Benjamin go.—Judah tries to persuade him to this.

AFTER they had advanced some distance on their journey, the brothers of Joseph, as we read in the Bible, stopped at an inn to refresh themselves, and to give food to their asses.

Inns, at that time, were very different from what they now are in our country. They were scarcely any thing more than a convenient stopping-place for travellers, where there was a well at which they could procure water, and a few trees, under the shade of which they could repose, and perhaps, in some cases, a rough house or shed, in which they could sleep during the night.

As one of their number was opening his sack to get some provender for his ass, he saw in it the money which he supposed he had paid to Joseph for the grain. He was greatly surprised, and immediately told his brethren of it. They were all much alarmed, and filled with apprehension lest

even the governor of Egypt himself, or some evil disposed person, had done it, that they might be accused, on their return, of having stolen it. They regarded it as another proof that God intended to bring trouble upon them for their past guilt; and that it was his over-ruling Providence which was thus so ordering events as to manifest his great displeasure toward them. "Their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, what is this that God hath done unto us?"

A guilty conscience finds no comfort in considering the providence of God. *The All-seeing eye, and the All-ruling hand, are to the sinner a source of constant disquietude and alarm.*

We are not told of any thing else which happened to the sons of Jacob on their way home.

On their arrival there, they told their father all that befell them in Egypt; and as they were emptying their sacks, "behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack; and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.

"And Jacob, their father, said unto them, me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me."

To Jacob's eye it seemed, indeed, as if a dark

cloud hung over all the prospects of his declining years. He had already suffered much, but he thought he had still more to suffer. He forgot the providence of God, which can bring good out of evil; and lamented, in the bitterness of his soul, that all the things which had happened to his sons were against him. He did not know that these very things were about to restore Joseph to his embraces, and to provide for the comfort of himself and family.

Reuben, seeing his father's great distress, and anxious to remove his apprehensions with regard to Benjamin's going to Egypt, said to him, "Slay my two sons, if I bring not Benjamin to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again."

This was both a foolish and wicked speech. What right had Reuben to give any permission to kill his sons; and what satisfaction would it be to Jacob, if he should lose Benjamin, to take the lives of two innocent grandchildren in order to punish their father?

This vehement declaration of Reuben had no effect upon Jacob. He could not endure the thought, for a moment, of parting with Benjamin.

"And he said, my son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if

mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

The famine still continued very grievous in the land of Canaan; and at length Jacob and his sons, and their families, had eaten up the grain which they had procured in Egypt. There was no other resource but to go there again, and Jacob directed his sons to do this.

They knew, however, that there was only one way in which they could hope that the governor of Egypt would furnish them with a supply, and that was, to take Benjamin along with them. Judah reminded his father of this. "The man," said he, "did solemnly protest unto us, saying, ye shall not see my face except your brother be with you. If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food: but if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you."

To what a severe trial the venerable patriarch was now called! Himself, his children, and their families, were in danger of famishing with hunger. If food is not procured, their lives must be sacrificed. But Benjamin was as dear to him as his own life. How can he part with this beloved son!

In the anguish of his soul, he reproached his sons with their imprudence.

“Wherefore,” said he, “dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother?”

“How could we help doing it,” they replied; “he made very particular inquiries respecting our situation here at home; he asked if our father was yet alive, and whether we had another brother; and we felt ourselves obliged to answer these inquiries just as they were put to us. Could we know beforehand that he would say, we must bring Benjamin down to Egypt?”

Still Jacob hesitated. The struggle was not yet over in his mind; and his sons saw that they had still further to expostulate with him, to persuade him, if possible, to give his consent.

Judah attempted to do this. “Send the lad (so called because he was the youngest son) with me,” said he, “and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and thou, and also our little ones.”

He then said that he would take the particular charge of Benjamin, and be accountable for his safe return; “if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever.”

He observed, too, that they were losing a great

deal of time by delaying so; and that, if they had only started in season, they might already have been to Egypt, and returned again to their home.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

Jacob consents to let Benjamin go.—Gifts prepared to carry to the governor of Egypt.—Jacob's sons set out on their journey.—They come before Joseph.—Their great fear.—Guilt causes fear.—The steward of Joseph allays their fears.

THE entreaties of his children at length prevailed; but it was almost in a state of despair that Jacob consented.

*If it must be so now*, said he, “if indeed I am driven to such a dreadful necessity that I must either see you all perish with hunger, or part with your brother Benjamin, my youngest and beloved child—I will yield. I yield; go, my sons; but I wish you to do every thing in your power to secure the favor of the governor of Egypt. He may suppose that you stole the money which you found in your sacks; and you must convince him that this was not the case. Carry down, as a present to him,

some of the choicest things that our country produces—some balm and honey, some spices, myrrh, nuts and almonds. Take twice as much money as you did before; and carry back, in addition to this, all the money which was in the sacks. Perhaps it was put in them by some mistake, and no harm will grow out of it.”

“Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man: and God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.”

His sons immediately made the necessary preparations for their journey, as Jacob had directed; and, Judah taking Benjamin under his particular care, they once more set out for Egypt.

No doubt their farewell was affecting, and painful to their aged parent. After charging them all, especially Judah, to see that no harm happened to Benjamin—he gave them his parting blessing, imploring for them the guidance and protection of Almighty God. Their wives, too, and little ones, stood around, to receive their affectionate embrace, and to bid them farewell. They still stood, silently gazing after them, as the travellers were winding their way across the distant hills; nor did they separate and return to their respective tents, until

the little band had quite vanished from their sight.

In the sadness of his heart, we have every reason to believe, Jacob went alone, to pour out his feelings before God—to commend his sons to the care and blessing of him *who is mighty to save*; and to pray that he himself might be sustained in this hour of trial, and be submissive to the will of God.

Afflicted old man ! God is teaching thee a lesson of patience and resignation, that thou mayest learn how to leave every thing in his hands. The time is not far distant, when the dark clouds which now seem to frown upon thee shall be scattered; and from behind them a bright and cheerful day shall shine upon thy steps, as thou descendest peacefully to the tomb.

The brothers of Joseph at length arrived in Egypt, and again came into his presence.

What must have been his feelings at the sight of Benjamin—the son of his own mother Rachel—with whom he had passed so many happy hours in their boyish days, and whom he had not seen for more than twenty years !

The sight of this beloved brother brought to Joseph's mind the recollection of gone-by scenes of the most affecting interest; and it was with difficulty that he could restrain his emotions, and prevent his brethren from discovering them. But he



was a man of great firmness, as well as of tender feeling. He summoned up his firmness, and still acted as if he knew not who they were.

We are not told where this interview between Joseph and his brethren took place. We know, however, that it was not in his own house. For we find, that at the same time he directed his steward (the man who provided for his family, and had the charge of all his domestic concerns) to take his brethren home to his own house, and get every thing ready for their dining with him at the usual hour, and to make the dinner a plenteous and sumptuous one.

The steward did so; and as the sons of Jacob entered the governor's house, they were afraid, fearing that now they were about to be charged with stealing the money which they found in their sacks, and that all that they had would be taken from them, and themselves be made the slaves of the governor.

If this had, indeed, happened to them, what a just retribution it would have been to almost all of them, for their having sold their own brother as a slave, and for their deceitful and wicked treatment of their father.

They knew that they deserved such a punishment; and it is not surprising that they feared it,

and trembled lest the righteous judgment of God should bring it upon them.

Remember, my dear children, that nothing makes such cowards of men as *a guilty conscience*. The Bible tells us that "the wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion."

They came near to the steward, while they were yet at the door, and began to excuse themselves to him on account of the money which was found in their sacks. They told him the circumstances under which they found it, and that they had brought it all back again, to give to the governor. They declared at the same time, that they could not possibly tell who it was that put the money into their sacks, or how it got there.

The steward saw their agitation, and endeavored to allay it. He told them not to be afraid, for that nothing wrong had been done, and that no harm would happen to them.

It is possible that this steward, being one of the family of Joseph, had been taught by him concerning the true God, and was a pious man. At any rate, the language which he used was like that of one who feared and obeyed God.

"Peace be to you," said he, "fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks. I had your money."

As if he had said, "Your money was once paid into my hands for the grain; and my acknowledging that I received it, as the steward of the governor, is sufficient to show that you are honest men. You need not trouble yourselves to ascertain how it found its way into your sacks. Keep it, as a gift from my master, the governor; or rather as a bounty which the kind providence of God—the God whom you profess to worship, and in whom your aged father trusts—has bestowed upon you."

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## CHAPTER XX.

Simeon brought out of prison.—The brethren of Joseph present their gifts to him.—Joseph can hardly restrain his feelings.—His brethren dine with him.—Remarks on temperance, and the duty of promoting it.

SIMEON, who, you recollect, was to be kept in confinement till his brethren returned with Benjamin, was now set at liberty, and brought by the steward to join the rest; and all entered the house of the governor.

The steward (as was customary at that time, and is still among the eastern nations) gave them water

with which to wash their feet; and fed also the asses which they brought with them.

In the meanwhile, the brethren of Joseph unpacked the precious articles which they intended to offer him as a gift from themselves and their father, and arranged them in order for that purpose. They did this, expecting that it would not be long before he would return, to dinner, and understanding that they were to dine there also.

When Joseph came, they presented him their gifts, and bowed themselves down before him quite to the ground; and here was another striking fulfillment of his dream.

He then, by means of the interpreter, "asked them of their welfare; and said, *is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?* And they answered, thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads and made obeisance."

Joseph was now directing his attention more particularly to Benjamin, and inquired, as if he were still ignorant of the fact, whether that was their youngest brother, of whom they had spoken to him when they first came down to Egypt. On being told that it was; he said, in a very tender and affectionate manner, as a kind parent would, *God be gracious unto thee, my son.*



He had scarcely uttered those words, when his feelings quite overcame him; so strong was his attachment to Benjamin. He could say nothing more. Indeed, he could remain no longer in the presence of his brethren, but hurried away as quick as possible to his chamber, and there gave vent to his feelings in a flood of tears.

But he soon returned; having washed his face, that it might not be known that he had been weeping; and with a good degree of composure gave directions to have the food brought in which had been prepared for them.

He ate alone by himself, as was the custom for the king, and the governor, and others who were high in office, to do.

Some of the Egyptians, too, who formed part of his family, or who had been invited to the entertainment, ate by themselves; and also his brethren apart by themselves.

We are told in the Bible that the reason of this separation was, that it was an abomination (a very disagreeable, and, in the opinion of the Egyptians, wicked thing) for one of their nation to eat with an Hebrew.

Some think that this arose from the fact of the Egyptians worshipping certain animals, the ox and others, which the Hebrews killed and ate, and also offered up in sacrifice. Others suppose that the Egyptians held the Hebrews in abhorrence because they were shepherds, a class of men who had made frequent incursions into Egypt, and done great injury to the inhabitants. Perhaps it is impossible to ascertain what the true cause was, as the thing happened such a long time ago, and the Bible gives no explanation of it.

When the brothers of Joseph were about to sit down to their meal, they were requested to sit in a certain order, which they did. After they were seated, and began to look round on each other, they

were surprised to see that they were seated exactly in the order of their ages, beginning with Reuben, and so down to Benjamin. This appeared to them, indeed, a very strange thing, and they were wholly unable to account for it.

As was usual, there were a great many different kinds of food placed before Joseph, which he sent round and distributed to the rest. As the sons of Jacob looked round again at the quantity of food which was thus sent to each, they were surprised to see that Benjamin's was five times as much as any of their's.

They enjoyed the entertainment much, and became *merry*, as it is expressed in the Bible, in drinking with Joseph. We are by no means to suppose from this that they drank to excess. The word *merry*, in our translation of the Bible, often means *joyful or glad*, and this is the meaning which we should give it in this place.

If I had time I should like to stop here a little, my dear children, and say something to you on the subject of *temperance*, both in eating and drinking. I hope you have already had instruction and advice from your parents and friend with regard to it; and that you have thought seriously about it yourselves.

You have heard of what is doing at the present day to promote the cause of temperance both in our

own and in other countries. What are *you doing* in this good work? You can do a great deal, even if you are still quite young, *by your own temperance*, which will give you good health, and good habits, and good resolutions; and so prepare you to be more active in this cause as you grow older. Your *example*, too, will have a happy effect upon your brothers, and sisters, and companions. And if you are old enough, I hope you have already begun *to be active* in endeavoring to lead others to promote the cause of temperance, and *to remove the curse of intemperance from the world*.

In Joseph's time they did not see the evil of intemperance in drinking, as we do. For they had no strong, fiery, intoxicating, and poisonous liquors, made at distilleries, and sold in shops, to ruin the bodies and souls of men. If that had been the case when Joseph lived, I have no doubt he would have been among the first, both by his example and influence, to do all he could to prevent the use of such liquors.

At his day, and indeed in later times, truly good and pious men were not brought to see and to feel the evils of intemperance so sensibly as to lead them to discover the only true remedy, *total abstinence from all spirituous liquors*. Their consciences were not enlightened and aroused on the subject; and, as



you know, it is only within a few years that they have begun to understand and to practise their duty.

Had Joseph known all that we know on this subject, he would have taken care to avoid even *the appearance of evil*. Do you do the same, and you will find in a course of *the strictest temperance*, and in endeavoring to promote it in others, an amount of health and strength; a clearness and vigor of mind; a cheerfulness and sprightliness of feeling; and a peace of conscience, which will abundantly reward you for what you may consider some self-denial, and for all your exertions in doing good in this way to your fellow-men.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

Joseph's brethren again set out for home.—His steward overtakes them, and charges them with having stolen the governor's cup.—What was this cup?—The cup found in Benjamin's sack.—They all return, and *come before Joseph*.—Judah's confession of their guilt.—Why did he make it?

THE brethren of Joseph intended to set out for home the next morning. In getting ready the grain that they were to carry with them, which was the

duty of the steward, Joseph directed him to fill their sacks full, as much as they could carry ; and to put every man's money which he had paid for the grain in his sack's mouth. He also directed the steward to take his silver cup (which was considered as belonging to the government, and for his own particular use) and to put it in the mouth of Benjamin's sack, together with his money.

All this having been done by the steward, without the knowledge of Joseph's brethren, very early the next morning, as soon as the day began to dawn, they set out on their journey.

After they had been gone a short time, and were not as yet any great distance from the city, Joseph ordered his steward to pursue and overtake them, and to inquire of them why they had done him evil for the good which he had done them. After thus accosting them, the steward was still further directed by Joseph to charge them with having taken his cup. He was directed to say, "Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he *divineth*? Ye have done evil in so doing."

Some think that the Egyptians, who were a very superstitious people, supposed that certain cups owned by some few individuals, or perhaps this cup alone, owned by the governor, had the power of enabling those who looked into it to see what would

happen; or to find out any thing that had happened, and what any person had said or done. This they think is what is meant by *divining*. But others suppose that *the Hebrew word* which the persons who translated our English Bible have rendered (or put into English) *to divine*, means also, *to search thoroughly after any thing*.

They think that the steward was ordered by Joseph to charge his brethren with having stolen the cup which he valued very highly, and for which (as they might have supposed) *he would make very diligent and careful search*, and be able *to divine*, or think with certainty who had taken it.

The latter meaning is that which appears to me to be the true one.

The steward did as he was ordered; and you may easily conceive that the brethren of Joseph were greatly astonished at what he said to them.

They expressed their surprise at it: "Wherefore," said they, "saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing! Behold, the money which we found in our sacks' mouth we brought back again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold? With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen."

The steward said that he would take them at their word; (though he was not so severe as they were willing he should be;) "he with whom it is found," said he, "shall be my servant, and ye shall be blameless."

They then took down their sacks to the ground and opened them, that a search might be made. The steward began at the eldest, and when he came at last to Benjamin's sack, there to be sure the cup was found.

On this discovery being made, their consternation and grief were so great that they could scarcely contain themselves; and they rent their clothes, as you have already seen it was customary to do at that time, under such circumstances of affliction.

After putting back their sacks of grain on the asses, they returned again with the steward to the city.

On entering the house of the governor, and coming into his presence, they all fell prostrate before him on the ground.

He inquired of them as they arose, why they had carried away his cup, and asked them if they did not suppose that such a man as he was had every means in his power *to make diligent search after it, and to divine (or think with certainty) who had taken it.*

To this Judah, in behalf of his brethren, replied ; “ What shall we say unto my lord ? What shall we speak ? Or how shall we clear ourselves ? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants : behold, we are my lord’s servants, both we and he also with whom the cup is found.”

It would seem that Judah had scarcely any hope of being able to prove that they were innocent. He might have thought it barely possible that Benjamin had stolen the cup. But, as something of the same kind had happened to them before, it is more probable that he supposed it was all a plan of the governor, or of some other person, to bring them into trouble, and to expose them to a severe punishment.

In a sort of despair, therefore, he confessed that they were all guilty. He hoped, probably, in this way, to save the life of Benjamin, for whom he was particularly accountable to his father. And he thought also, that by throwing themselves entirely upon the mercy of the governor, and humbly confessing their crime, he might be induced to treat them with less severity ; and instead of putting them to death immediately, keep them in bondage. By this means they might have time, and find out some way of proving their innocence.

## CHAPTER XXII.

Joseph still keeps his brethren in suspense.—Remarks on his conduct.—His reply to Judah.—Judah's expostulation.

HERE was another occasion on which Joseph had his brethren in his power. He might have acquitted them of the particular crime of stealing his cup; but he could have reproached them with the deeper guilt of *stealing their own brother*, and selling him as a slave. Had they denied this, and asserted, as they had done to their father, that Joseph was dead, one word of his could have convicted them of falsehood on the spot, and thrown them into the greatest confusion and dismay.

How he could have overwhelmed them with the most severe and just rebuke! How he could have taken vengeance on them, and satisfied his revenge to the full, had such a disposition existed in his breast!

But he felt very differently toward them; and if he still concluded to keep them in suspense, it was to prepare the way for their deeper repentance; it was to let them see more clearly how forgiving and generous his own character was; it was to lead them to acknowledge and admire the providence of

God in the fulfillment of those dreams that had been so offensive to them, which had, already, been attended with so much good to themselves, to their venerable father, and to all their families.

It is difficult for us to judge of all that Joseph did in his intercourse with his brethren. We do not know all the circumstances of the case. Very many of these circumstances are not stated in the Bible. That Joseph thought that he had good reasons for what he did, and that he really wished to do his brethren and his father all the good in his power, we must conclude, without any hesitation, from what we shall see, as we still farther attend to his history.

If there was any thing which he said or did, accompanied with such kind of deception as to make it a falsehood; (or if it amounted to saying that *something was, which was not—or was not, which was*;) then, in this respect he did wrong, and is not to be justified. Let us judge him, however, with great candor; remembering what wicked and perverse men he had to deal with, and how fearful he was lest their finding out too soon who he was, might defeat all his plans for the welfare of his aged father, of his beloved Benjamin, and, indeed, of themselves, and of the whole family of his kindred, at Hebron.

We will now see what Joseph's reply was to Judah.

Judah, you recollect, had told Joseph that they were all his servants ; or that he could keep them all in a state of bondage, as a punishment for their guilt.

“ God forbid,” said Joseph, “ that I should do so : but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant ; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.”

This was truly a severe trial for Judah, who had given such strong assurances to his father that no harm should happen to Benjamin, and that he should be brought back to Hebron in safety.

What shall he say or do ? To assert the innocence of his brother was now too late. He had confessed their mutual guilt ; as well of Benjamin, as of himself, and of the rest. They were all strangers in Egypt ; in the entire power of one who was second in authority only to the king himself ; with no advocate or friend ; and guilty, by their own confession, of an aggravated offence. If this offence should rest, as it was likely to do, on Benjamin alone, it would make him a slave, never more to return to Hebron, and thus *bring down the gray hairs of Jacob with sorrow to the grave.*

In the midst of such mingled and desponding feel-



ings Judah broke out into this most pathetic expostulation: "O my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh;" (and having power equal to that of the king, I exceedingly tremble before thee.)

"My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother? And we said unto my lord, we have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.

"And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. And we said unto my lord, the lad cannot leave his father; for if he should leave his father, his father would die. And thou saidst unto thy servants, except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

"And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, go again, and buy us a little food. And we said, we cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down: for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us. And thy servant my father said unto us, ye know that my wife bare me two sons: and the one went out from me, and I

said, surely he is torn in pieces ; and I saw him not since : and if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

“ Now, therefore, when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us ; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad’s life, it shall come to pass when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die : and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, if I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever.

“ Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide, instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord ; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father and the lad be not with me ? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.”

## CHAPTER XXIII.

Joseph makes himself known to his brethren.—His address to them.—His forgiveness of them.—The duty of forgiveness.—Has the reader this spirit ?

JUDAH did not plead in vain. While Joseph heard him, the most tender recollections rushed upon his mind—his mother, his home, his father—Ephrath, Hebron, Shechem, Dothan—all rose up before him, in quick and melancholy remembrance.

He could not endure the thought of doing any thing to cause such anguish to his aged parent, and that would *bring down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.*

He listened with breathless attention till Judah had done speaking. His heart was full. His countenance showed it. His voice showed it, while, being no longer able to control his feelings, he ordered all except his brethren to retire.

They did so ; and Joseph gave vent to his tears. He wept aloud. He wept so loud that they heard him in the other parts of the house ; and in the midst of their astonishment he said to his brethren, *I am Joseph. Doth my father yet live ?*

His brethren were too much overcome to make

any reply. They must have been horror-struck to see Joseph standing before them, the governor of Egypt!

“ And Joseph said unto his brethren, come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing (planting the seeds) nor harvest.

“ And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, (the descendants, yet to be very numerous, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,) and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

“ So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh; (to advise him, and take a parental care of his concerns;) and lord of all his house; and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

“ Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not. And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children,

and thy children's children, and thy flocks and thy herds, and all that thou hast.

“And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

“And behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you.

“And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste, and bring down my father hither.

“And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover, he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.”

What an interesting and affecting scene! God has given it to you, my dear children, in the Bible, for your instruction. And you can, indeed, derive a great deal of instruction from it.

Mark the conduct of Joseph in it; for it deserves your imitation.

There stood his brethren before him, who had done him so many injuries; and they knew, at last, that in the mighty governor of Egypt they beheld their brother whom they had hated so bitterly, and treated so cruelly. How their guilt must have risen

up before them in all its enormity ! How mean and degraded they must have felt in his presence ! How justly they must have thought they deserved his severest rebuke ! They probably were expecting it, as the least punishment, even if he did not inflict any other, which was due to their wickedness !

But what amazement must have filled their breasts, to see, that instead of all this, their injured brother was about to treat them with the greatest kindness. He does not reproach them at all. He even tries to turn their thoughts from the recollection of their own guilt, to the merciful providence of God, who had over-ruled it for his good, and for that of themselves, and their father, and their whole family.

Perhaps, in this respect, Joseph may have been too lenient. But he knew there would be another, and probably a better season, for them to think over all that had happened. He wished to show them how freely and fully he forgave them. And, if any thing could lead them to the deepest repentance for their past guilt, it was surely such generous and noble conduct on the part of a brother whom they had so grossly injured.

How have you felt toward those who have injured you ; and how have you treated them ? No one, I presume, has ever done you an injury any thing

like that which the brethren of Joseph inflicted upon him

He felt no revenge, *no desire to injure those who had injured him*. On the contrary, he wished to return them all *the good* in his power, for *the evil* which he had received from them. See, too, the kind and affectionate, the noble and generous manner in which he showed these feelings. There was no allusion to their cruel and wicked treatment of him; no exulting because he had them in his power; no boasting of his being willing to forgive them; not even a rebuke or a reproach, or a word said to make them feel their littleness and their meanness.

*Have you felt so, and acted so*, toward those who have injured you? Do you not think that the conduct of Joseph is worthy of your highest effort to imitate it?

It is, indeed, so. If you have not felt and acted at all as he did, toward those who have injured you, then you are like his wicked brethren; and *the evil passion of revenge still finds a place within your breasts*.

You have need, then, of sincere repentance before God on this account. And this should show you the exceeding sinfulness of your heart. For you

have not the spirit of Joseph. You have not the spirit of Christ.

Christ forgave his enemies, even those wicked and cruel men who nailed him to the cross! He prayed for them in his dying moments, that God also would forgive them. And he has told us that if we do not forgive *our enemies*, those who have injured us in any way whatever, and pray for them, and return good for evil, God will not forgive us, but banish us, for ever, from his presence.

Think of all this. And seriously ask yourselves the question, if these things are so, whether you must not become *very different* from what you are; whether you must not have your *inmost soul renewed and made holy by the Spirit of God*, before you can hope to enjoy his presence and favor in heaven?



## CHAPTER XXIV.

Pharaoh and his household glad to see that the brethren of Joseph are come.—Pharaoh tells Joseph to invite his father and all his family to come to Egypt.—Joseph furnishes them with things necessary for their removal.—His parting advice to them.—Peace-making.

It was not long before the king of Egypt and all his household heard of the strange things which had taken place, and that the men who had come from Canaan to buy grain were the brethren of Joseph; and that his venerable father was still living.

They were all, both Pharaoh and those who were about him, exceedingly pleased to hear it. And to show his strong personal friendship for Joseph, and the deep interest that he felt in the welfare of Jacob and the whole family, Pharaoh requested Joseph to give this very kind invitation to his brethren.

“Say unto thy brethren,” said he, “this do ye; lade your beasts and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; and take your father, and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good

of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land.

“Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt, for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also regard not your stuff,” (the furniture, and the various implements and tools that you have, and all things of that description.)

The brethren of Joseph were overjoyed at this kindness of Pharaoh, and prepared to follow his directions.

They were furnished with wagons by Joseph, as Pharaoh had commanded, and also with abundance of provisions for the journey. Joseph gave them, beside all this, a supply of clothing.

It was customary for rich men, at that time, to present garments to those whom they intended to treat with peculiar respect and friendship. They usually kept a large wardrobe, or collection of garments of different kinds and sizes, so that they could make these presents whenever they chose, without any delay or difficulty.

Joseph, in this way, meant to let all the Egyptians see with how much respect he wished to treat his brethren, and what an affectionate regard he had for them.

He gave each of them changes of raiment, or

more than one suit; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment.

He sent also, by his brethren, a present to his aged parent—ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten others laden with grain and bread and nuts, for his father to use on his journey from Canaan to Egypt.

After all the preparations were made, the sons of Jacob took leave of their brother, and set out for Hebron.

His parting advice was what they, doubtless, needed. *See*, said he, *that ye fall not out by the way.*

There was some danger, as Joseph thought, of their doing this. They might begin to find fault with each other. Some might charge others with being the *first* who had proposed to take revenge on Joseph for his offensive dreams. Reuben and Judah might endeavor to free themselves from all guilt in the matter, and cast the severest reproaches upon the rest.

They might be envious of Benjamin, who had been treated with such distinguished regard by Joseph, and who had received a present so much more valuable than any, or all, of their's. They might not treat him with kindness, and thus pre-

pare the way for giving trouble to their father on their return home.

They might dispute, not only about what *had happened*, but about their *future* plans; how they should carry their property to Egypt, and how each should retain and have the management of what particularly belonged to him.

Joseph knew their dispositions, and how much they needed a word of caution; and he thought, that, under the peculiar circumstances in which they were placed, it would probably be regarded, and do them good.

“Blessed are the peace-makers,” said our Savior, “for they shall be called the children of God.”

My dear children, in this respect, imitate the example of Joseph. Do, each one of you, be *a peace-maker*. Be at peace among your brothers and sisters, and among your companions, at all times. Do all you can to prevent disputing and quarreling, and to lead all to love each other, and to do each other good.

## CHAPTER XXV.

His sons, on their arrival, tell their father that Joseph is alive.—Jacob's joy.—They all set out for Egypt.—They stop at Beer-sheba.—An interesting spot, and why?—God's promise to Jacob.—Their arrival in Egypt.

ONCE more the sons of Jacob were on their way to Canaan. What strange news they would have to tell to their father and kindred; and with what mingled emotions of joy and shame they would relate the account of Joseph's prosperity, and at the same time expose their former cruelty and falsehood!

At length they came to Hebron; and the deepest anxiety was felt on the part of Jacob and his family to know the result of their late visit, to see if Simeon was released, and if Benjamin was in safety.

They soon made it known to their father that Joseph was yet alive, and that he was governor over all the land of Egypt.

This was too unexpected, and too astonishing for Jacob, at first, to receive as truth. He did not, he could not believe what appeared to him like the returning of his son from the dead; and his heart fainted within him.

But when he heard more particularly all the circumstances, and the message which Joseph had sent; and saw the wagons that were to carry him and all his family to Egypt, his feelings changed. Joy took the place of doubt and despondency, and the venerable patriarch exclaimed, *It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.*

How the strength of a father's love shows itself in these few, yet affecting words. He thought not of the power and rank of Joseph, of his great wealth, and the splendor in which he lived. He thought merely of the simple fact, that he was yet in life; and that he should again meet the child of his beloved Rachel, and the solace of his declining age.

As soon as a few necessary preparations were made, Jacob, and the large family of whom he was the head, commenced their journey to Egypt.

On their way they came to Beer-sheba, a place quite in the south-western part of Canaan, and about twenty miles from Hebron.

It was *here* that Abraham, the grandfather of Jacob, had formerly tarried a short time, and planted a grove, in the shade of which he might engage in worship. And it was here that he had offered up his prayers to the ever-living God.

It was *here* that the Lord appeared unto Isaac, and said, "I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and will multiply thy seed, (or give thee very numerous descendants,) for my servant Abraham's sake."

After this, and to commemorate the event, Isaac built an altar there, and offered up his sacrifices and prayers to God.

And it was while residing here, that Jacob, by the direction of his mother Rebekah, and in a deceptive and very wicked way, obtained the blessing which Isaac had intended to bestow upon Esau.

It was from Beer-sheba also that Jacob, at the command of his father, went on his long journey to Padan-aram, where he married Rachel, and where Joseph was born.

The recollection of all these circumstances must have deeply affected the mind of the venerable patriarch, as he arrived at this interesting spot.

No doubt he looked back with shame and contrition at the wicked deception which he had practised upon his father, and with devout gratitude to God for all his unmerited goodness.

Since he left Beer-sheba, in how many various forms this goodness had visited him; and now, to crown it all, Joseph is still alive, and he is on his way to meet him.

In what more suitable place could Jacob acknowledge the great kindness of God toward him, and pour out his soul before him, in praise and thanksgiving!

He did this; for we are told that *he offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac*; unto that God who had promised to bless Isaac, and to give him a very numerous offspring, as was already beginning to be the case in the family of which Jacob was the head.

This promise God was now about to renew to Jacob. For "he spoke to him in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob."

"And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes;" that is, he shall close thine eyes, as thou art about to die.

This promise of God was afterward abundantly fulfilled. The descendants of Jacob became indeed a great nation, which returned to Canaan; and in this sense Jacob himself may be said to have been brought back again.

And Joseph, too, was permitted to close the eyes of his dying parent; a mark of affection and respect



which Jacob must have anticipated with a tender and melancholy pleasure.

From Beer-sheba they proceeded on their way to Egypt; "and the sons of Jacob carried their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed (or descendants) with him," the number of which was sixty-six.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

Joseph meets his father in Goshen.—He presents five of his brethren to Pharaoh, who grants them leave to dwell in Goshen.—Joseph presents his father to Pharaoh.—What Jacob says.—Life short.—What is death?—Is the reader prepared to die?

JOSEPH had sent word to his father that, when he and his family came down to Egypt, they should dwell in that part of it which was called Goshen. It was on the eastern side of Egypt, extending toward the Red Sea and the borders of Canaan.

Judah was sent by Jacob to inform Joseph of his father's approach.

“ And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet his father to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.”



What must have been the feelings of each, at this moment, to meet once more, after so long a separation! Through how many trials they had passed! What changes had taken place in each! Time had whitened the locks of the father, and age and sor-

row had deepened the furrows in his cheeks, and bowed down his venerable form.

When they last parted, Joseph was a youth of seventeen, going to inquire after his brethren, in the valley of Shechem. He was now arrived to mature manhood, a father, and the governor of Egypt.

*Now let me die, said Jacob, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.*

He could say no more. The last fond wish of his heart was gratified, and he was ready to depart in peace as soon as God should see fit to call him hence.

Joseph then told them that he would go and inform Pharaoh of their arrival, and let him know their occupation—that they were shepherds, and that they had brought their flocks and their herds with them. He requested them also to say the same thing to Pharaoh, when he should make inquiry of them, that he might permit them to settle in the land of Goshen. For there they would be in a country, as it were, of their own, and separated from the Egyptians; and this Joseph knew would contribute greatly to their comfort and prosperity. They would not be exposed to the hatred and vexation of a people who, you recollect, we have before had occasion to observe, held the business of a snepherd in great detestation.

After Joseph had given the information to Pharaoh, he took five of his brethren and presented them to the king.

On his inquiring what their occupation was, they replied, "Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers."

"They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come: for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen."

The king granted their request, and directed Joseph, if there were any of his brethren who were fitted, by their activity and skill, for the situation, to make them overseers of his cattle.

Joseph also brought in Jacob his father, and presented him to Pharaoh; *and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.*

On the king's asking Jacob his age, he replied; "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage."

A pilgrim is a person who has no fixed home, and who is on a long journey, tarrying a little

while here, and a little while there, and travelling on to a distant place which he is very anxious to reach. The whole course of his way is called his *pilgrimage*.

Well might Jacob call himself a pilgrim, and his life a pilgrimage. He had been moving from place to place, and through one scene and another; and now, in his old age, had undertaken another journey, to find another home. He believed, however, that there was still a better home in heaven for all the people of God; and thither he directed his longing eyes; for there, he trusted, his wanderings and trials would all be over, and that he should find *eternal rest*.

Many of his ancestors had lived to a much greater age than he could expect to reach; and although he had lived to number one hundred and thirty years, how rapid had been their flight, and how few they appeared to be in comparison with a never-ending eternity! He might well say that they had been *evil*; for God had seen fit, in his wise and holy providence, to try his servant Jacob with trouble and affliction in a great variety of ways.

Have you ever thought that *you, like Jacob, are a pilgrim on the earth*? Ah! you know not how many changes and trials may await you! You may have to part with your dear parents and friends,

and to leave your pleasant home. You may yet have to pass through many scenes of trouble and sorrow. And even if you should have less, much less, of affliction than Jacob had, and be more as he was in his days of comfort and prosperity, remember, *your pilgrimage will soon be ended.* Death must come at last, and how quickly you know not.

How many, much younger than you are, have already *ended their pilgrimage.* Take a walk in some neighboring grave-yard, and examine the tomb-stones, and see how many are buried there, the days of whose pilgrimage have been much fewer than yours.

But what if you should live to old age. You will have then to say as Jacob did, when you *look back* upon your past life, *few have been the years of my pilgrimage*; they have gone like "a vapor, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away."

You will *look forward*, as Jacob did, into an eternity which is never, never to end.

O to be prepared to go into that eternity, as Jacob was, when, on meeting Joseph, he repeated his readiness to die !

*Are you ready to die ?* It is a solemn thing to die ! The hands cease to move, and the lips to

speaking; the eyes to see, and the ears to hear. The lungs breathe and the heart beats no longer. The whole body becomes stiff, and cold, and motionless, and it is soon laid in the silent grave, there to await the summons to rise again at the resurrection of the dead.

But this is *a small part of death*. To the Christian it should have no terrors. It should seem to him as a gentle sleep, and the grave as a calm and quiet resting-place for his frail and worn out body. So it has seemed to many who have met it in perfect peace; and to others who have met it with joy. O may it seem so to you when *you* come to die.

But the mere dissolution of the body is but *a small part of death*.

*Death separates the soul from the body, and introduces it into the eternal world.* Yes, this is the most solemn part of dying. Your *soul*, all that within you which thinks, and feels, and acts, and is capable of enjoyment and of suffering, your never-dying soul, goes into the eternal world. It goes there *to be happy or miserable for ever*.

It goes there to spend the long, long ages of endless existence in the enjoyment of the friendship and favor of God, and of the Savior; in the society of pure and holy spirits, who all love God and each

other; in worshipping and serving the wisest and the best of beings; in admiring the countless ways in which he shows his wisdom and goodness; in rejoicing to see others good and happy; and in making, *itself*, a ceaseless progress in knowledge, in holiness, and in happiness.

Or it goes there *to lose this*; to be banished for ever from this scene of unmingled delight; to dwell in a wretched place, with the vilest and most miserable beings; to see and to hear what is most sinful and odious; to feel the horrors of a guilty and reproving conscience; to bewail the folly of having lived and died impenitent, and without faith in Christ; to *look back*, and find none but painful recollections; to *look around*, and see no source of comfort or relief; to *look forward* with no hope of change; and thus, in gloomy and terrible despair, to pass hour after hour, knowing that all this misery must continue and increase, without alleviation, and without end.

*Are you prepared to die? Do you truly love and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ?*



## CHAPTER XXVII.

Jacob and his family settled in Goshen.—God's goodness to them.—His goodness to the reader.—Is the reader grateful to God ?

JACOB again implored the blessing of God upon Pharaoh, and then left him.

Immediately after this, Joseph took the proper steps to have his father, and his brethren, and their families, put in possession of the land which Pharaoh had directed to be given to them as the place of their residence.

We are told that it was *the best of the land*, a choice and favored spot ; and there, after all his wanderings and trials, Jacob, in his declining years, was happily settled, with his sons and their families around him. Joseph, the truly dutiful child and affectionate brother, furnished them with all that was necessary, in the continued season of famine, for their support and comfort ; while his situation as governor of Egypt, and the esteem in which he was held by the people, were a sufficient security that his father and brethren should receive nothing but

kind and respectful treatment from such of the inhabitants as might have intercourse with them.

While Jacob and his numerous family were enjoying, in this manner, the blessings of Providence, and were fed from the opening of his bountiful hand, how sensibly they must have felt (if they all felt as they ought) the striking interposition of God in their behalf. In the midst of a most distressing famine, thus to be safely removed to *the very country* in which alone sustenance was to be found, was in itself a very wonderful deliverance. In addition to this, they were under the protection of *the king of this country*, and supplied with food from his own store-houses, without any demand being made upon them to pay for it. And then to render this all a most striking illustration of the goodness of God toward them, the protection and bounty of the king came to them through the hands of *a son and a brother*. Nor can we stop here; this very goodness of God showed how full he was of long-suffering and forbearance toward those whose *cruel wickedness and falsehood*, over-ruled by his providence, had sent this son and brother into Egypt, thus to be raised up *at the very time that they were in extreme need of it, to be their deliverer and friend*.

You doubtless are ready to say that Jacob and his family had thus the most abundant causes of

gratitude to God, and that they ought to have showed this gratitude by loving him and obeying his commands.

And what has God done for you? Have you ever thought of all his goodness, and his long-suffering and forbearance toward you? For he has been doing you good, in a countless variety of ways, ever since you were born, notwithstanding you have sinned so much and so often against him.

He has as truly taken care of you, and supplied all *your wants* by the hands of your parents and friends, as he did the wants of Jacob and his family by the hands of Joseph.

You have had no famine to distress and alarm you. You have not been obliged to leave your homes, and to go to another country in quest of food.

You have lived in a land even more to be desired as a place of residence than Goshen. O! you have had tens of thousands, *innumerable* comforts, and mercies, and privileges. And you enjoy them in abundance still.

Are you truly grateful to God for all those blessings, and to his Son Jesus Christ, who shed his blood on the cross that all who believe in him may be saved? Do you show this gratitude by loving and obeying God, by imitating the example of the

Savior, and by doing all you can to make others good and happy ?

These are serious questions. But it is important that you should think of them, and answer them. How will you answer them? Must you say that you know not what it is *to feel grateful to God and his Son*, and to seek to do the will of God, and to promote the real good of others, even *the good of their souls* ?

How ready you are to say that Jacob and his family would have shown themselves to be most wicked and ungrateful, if they had not felt thankful to God for all his mercies, and endeavored to love him and obey his commands ! How could they be so base and unfeeling ! you would exclaim.

Cast these reproaches upon yourself. While you think thus of what it seems to you would be so base and unfeeling, had Jacob and his family had no gratitude toward God ; think of the judgment which God and his Son, and all holy beings must pass upon your feelings and conduct ; and how base and unfeeling, how ungrateful and wicked *you must appear in their sight* ?

What have you to do but to humble yourself before God, and to repent of *this ingratitude*, and of all your other sins ? What have you to do but to confess all these your sins to God ; and to beseech

him, for Christ's sake, to pardon you; and to shed down upon you the Holy Spirit; that with a penitent and grateful heart you may henceforth love him with your whole soul, and seek to do his will?

Will you do this, and thus secure the favor of God, the friendship of Christ, the influences of the Spirit, and be blessed in this life, and be blessed for ever!

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Egyptians give their cattle to Joseph for food.—They are again in want, and give themselves and their land.—He gives them seed to sow.—A perpetual law, that one fifth of all the produce shall be the king's.—Remarks on the conduct of Joseph.

THE famine was still very distressing, both in Egypt and in the land of Canaan; and we read in the Bible, that the people *fainted*, or were exceedingly feeble and disheartened in consequence of it.

Joseph had continued to sell grain to the inhabitants of Egypt and of Canaan, and to receive their money in payment, until they had nearly parted with it all. This money he took and deposited in

the house of Pharaoh, as it was the property of the king.

When the money was almost all gone, the Egyptians came to Joseph in their distress, and said, "Give us bread; for why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth."

Joseph had some good reason for not providing the Egyptians with grain, without any compensation on their part. He might have seen that it would make many of them idle, and that others would not use it in the most prudent and economical way for themselves and their cattle.

He told them that he would take their cattle in payment for the grain; and he might thus have found another advantage in this course, that of saving the lives of many of these animals, which would otherwise have perished with hunger.

So the Egyptians brought their cattle to Joseph, "and he gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses; and he fed them with bread, for all their cattle, that year."

But soon all the cattle were, in this way, exchanged for the food that the people received from Joseph; and they were once more in great necessity.

They had still their lands to offer, and they themselves, as servants, or bondmen, to the king. They

did this ; and Joseph gave them food, and thus acquired for Pharaoh, as his own property, all the land of Egypt, and the services of the inhabitants to labor for his benefit, and in any way that he directed.

This happened during the last year of the famine ; so that the people were expecting, the succeeding year, that the earth would begin again to bring forth in abundance, if the seed was planted.

They begged Joseph therefore for seed, at the same time that they offered him their land, and themselves, in payment for food ; that they might provide for the coming year ; and that there might be a supply of grain throughout Egypt.

Before he complied with this request, however, he removed all the inhabitants, from the small towns and the country, into the cities. He did this, probably, because it would be so much easier to deal out their food to them, if they were near the store-houses in which the grain was deposited ; and these store-houses, you recollect, were all in the cities.

The priests (or princes, as the original word is by some translated) received their supply of food from the king without being obliged to give up their land, as the other inhabitants did.

They were probably considered as a higher and privileged class of the community. From among them the king chose his chief officers, and other

magistrates, to assist him in the government; and their various duties were such that they were all fed, during the famine, at the expense of Pharaoh.

In due season, before the expiration of the last year of the famine, Joseph distributed seed among the inhabitants. In doing this he said: "Behold, I have bought you this day, and your land, for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land. And it shall come to pass, in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones."

This giving a fifth part of the annual increase of the land to the king, continued to be a law in Egypt, with regard to all the inhabitants excepting the priests, who paid no tax of this kind.

At the present day, we should not think it right for one, in the situation in which Joseph was, to oblige those who were nearly perishing with hunger, to sell their lands and themselves for food; or even to accept of such an offer, if it should be made voluntarily on their part. But we know not all the circumstances of the case. If we do not justify Joseph in what he did, let us consider how different may have been the opinions which prevailed among men at that time on this subject; and that



there was, by no means, the same degree of light that there is now with regard to *the rights* which each man possesses, and with regard to *the duties* which we owe to each other.

Besides, the inhabitants seem, at last, to have had the entire use of the land, and to have enjoyed the entire fruits of their labor, with the exception of a fifth part of the increase, which they paid as a tax to the king.

While these things were going on in the other parts of Egypt, Jacob and his family were dwelling in Goshen peacefully and safely. Their families increased rapidly in numbers ; and during the years that succeeded the famine, they added to the extent and value of their possessions, and became exceedingly prosperous and flourishing.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

Jacob drawing near the close of his life.—Joseph visits him.—What is an oath?—Its solemn obligation explained.—Jacob requires Joseph to swear that he will bury the body of his father in the cave of Machpelah.—Joseph takes an oath to do this.

It was seventeen years after Jacob was settled with his family in Egypt, and when he was one hundred and forty-seven years old, that he found himself becoming very feeble, and evidently drawing near the close of life.

So he sent for Joseph, that he might see him in season, to make a request of him which lay very near his heart.

It was an event which Joseph had thought for some time could not be far distant; yet it was one which affected him deeply, and he went, in sadness, to visit his father, whose dying counsels he now expected to hear.

Among other things, there was *one*, as I have said, which lay very near the heart of Jacob. He had a wish to be buried in Canaan, in the land of his fathers; and that his body should lie with theirs, in their own burying-place.

Abraham had bought the cave of Machpelah for this purpose. It was *there* that his remains were laid by his sons Isaac and Ishmael. It was *there* that Jacob and his brother Esau had laid the body of his father Isaac. It was *there* that Sarah, and Rebekah, and Leah were buried; and it was *there* that Jacob now desired to be laid, after his decease, by his own children.

He was so very anxious to have this desire of his heart accomplished, that he would be satisfied with nothing short of a *solemn oath* from Joseph to that effect.

An oath is a peculiar way of stating what we believe to be the truth, or of making a promise. It is the same thing as if the person who *takes the oath* should say, "I believe that God now sees me, and knows all my secret thoughts and feelings. I believe that he will be very angry with me if I do not tell the exact truth; or if I promise what I do not truly intend to perform. I believe that he will not only be angry with me for doing so, but that he will punish me severely. I believe that there is a future judgment, at which God will judge all men according to what they have done in this world; and I believe that there is a heaven and a hell; to the former of which those who love and obey God will be admitted: and to the latter of which those

who disobey him and die impenitent will be sentenced, to endure the terrible expressions of his hatred of sin.

“Believing this, I give up all my hope in the future mercy of God toward me, if I now say or do any thing which is *not exactly and strictly true*; and am willing that God should cast me off from his presence, and sentence me to the pains of hell, for ever.”

This is taking an oath, or, as it is sometimes called, *swearing*.

I have given you this account of it, that you may always remember what a solemn transaction it is: a transaction, not between men merely, but between the person who takes the oath, and the great God, *the supreme Judge of heaven and of earth*.

Many persons, when they are called upon to take an oath, do it without much reflection, and in a very light and careless manner. And I am sorry to say, that sometimes those who call upon persons to swear, are equally unconcerned. This must all be very displeasing to God. I hope and pray, my dear children, that if you are ever placed in such circumstances, so as either to receive an oath from another, or to swear yourselves, you will not forget how solemn a transaction it is, and that you will act in a very serious and becoming manner.

Jacob acted in this manner when he required an oath from Joseph. They both felt that it was a very solemn thing, and that God was present with them in the performance of it.

The mode of doing it was very different from that which is now practised. At the present day, while a person is swearing, or taking an oath, in some places, he holds up his right hand, as a sign of his *appeal to God*, which appeal I have already described. In other places, as a sign of the same thing, he kisses the Bible.

The sign of this appeal to God, which Jacob required of Joseph, was a singular one. There have been many things written by learned men to explain it; but, after all, it is very doubtful whether the reason of it is at all known. At any rate, I shall not undertake to explain it.

Said Jacob to Joseph, "If now I have found grace in thy sight, (if you truly love me, my son, and are willing to do me a great favor,) put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt: but I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place. And he said, I will do as thou hast said. And he said, swear unto me.

“And Joseph sware unto him. And Israel (or Jacob) bowed himself upon the bed’s head.”

Some learned men, who are well acquainted with the Hebrew language, think that *the Hebrew word* which is translated, in our English Bible, the bed’s head, or *the head of the bed*, might better have been put into English, thus—*the top of the staff*.

So that the meaning would be, that Jacob bowed himself down, or worshipped God, leaning, on account of his feebleness, on the top of his staff, to support him.

This is very probably the meaning; and it shows us how solemn a transaction Jacob thought it was, in which himself and Joseph had been engaged, and on which he thus bowed himself before God to implore his blessing.

After this, Joseph returned home; expecting, however, very soon to be called again to the dying bed of his venerable parent.

## CHAPTER XXX.

Joseph goes to be with his father when he dies.—He takes his sons with him.—Jacob considers them as his own children.—He blesses them.—Explanation of this blessing.

THE melancholy tidings at length came to Joseph, that his father was now very near to the borders of the grave.

Joseph hastened to see him, that he might comfort him in his last moments, and pay every attention and respect that was due to so good and kind a parent. He took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim; the former about twenty-five years of age, the latter a year younger. Their father was now about fifty-six years of age.

Jacob, at this time, was so feeble that he was confined to his bed; when he was told, however, that Joseph had come to see him, it was such pleasing news, and revived him so much, that he had strength enough to sit up on the bed to welcome his son, and converse with him.

He wished to tell him things of the greatest importance before he died. He remembered the promises which God had made to Abraham, and Isaac,

and himself; and desired to have Joseph feel how deeply he and his sons were interested in them.

He spoke of God's appearing to him in the land of Canaan, and blessing him; and of the promise made to him at that time, that his descendants should become an exceedingly numerous people, to whom God would give the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession.

He then told Joseph that he considered Manasseh and Ephraim *as his own children*, belonging to his family as truly as his own sons did, and entitled, together with their descendants, to an equal share in all the blessings which had been promised to him and to his posterity.

His faith in the promises of God was firm. He had no doubt of their fulfillment, and that his descendants would return to the land of his fathers. It was this which led him to make Joseph swear that his remains should be carried back to Canaan. And he wished, by having this done, and by what he was now saying, to produce in his son, and in all his children, and in their descendants, the strongest attachment to the country of their ancestors, and the most ardent desire to return there, as soon as Providence should open the way.

To Canaan his own attachment was strong, even in death. It afforded him a melancholy pleasure to



think that it would be the place of his burial. Its past scenes filled his soul with the most tender recollections; and he would make yet another impression in favor of his beloved country on the heart of Joseph, by recalling to his mind *one of these scenes* which a son could never think of unmoved.

“And as for me,” said the venerable patriarch, “when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath.”

All nations have loved the spot where the bones of their ancestors repose. *The graves of our fathers!* How many affecting thoughts are called up by these words! Who can think of the place where the remains of a parent are laid, of a brother or sister, of kindred and friends, without the deepest emotion!

I cannot but suppose that his father's tender mention of Rachel, of her death and burial, touched the heart of Joseph with sadness, and that he dropped the tears of filial gratitude to the memory of a beloved mother.

The advanced age of Jacob had nearly deprived him of sight. He saw a little, but very indistinctly.

“Who are these?” said he, as he caught a glimpse of two young men who were standing near his bed.

“They are my sons,” said Joseph, “whom God hath given me in this place.”

“Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them,” was the affectionate request of their grandfather.

On their being brought near to him, he kissed them and embraced them, and observed to Joseph that he once thought he should never see *him* again; and yet God had not only permitted him to do this, but to see *his children* also.

Joseph then withdrew his sons from the embraces of his father, and *bowed himself with his face to the earth*.

He did this to show Jacob and all around him the deep affection and respect which he felt for his venerable parent, and how entirely he forgot that he was the rich and powerful governor of Egypt, when he stood, *a son*, by the bed of *a dying father*.

He arose and again brought his sons near their grandfather, to receive his blessing. In doing this, he wished Jacob, as was customary, to place his right hand on the head of the eldest, and his left hand on the head of the youngest, while blessing them. He therefore took Ephraim in his right hand, leading him toward Jacob's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand, leading him toward Jacob's right hand.

But what was his surprise to see his father immediately cross his hands, so as to place his right hand on the head of Ephraim, the youngest ; and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, the eldest ; and proceed to implore the blessing of God upon them.

“ And he blessed Joseph, (for he blessed the father in blessing his children,) and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, (whom they loved and obeyed,) the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads ; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac ; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”

It would take a long time to go into an explanation of what Jacob probably intended by the word *angel*. Many learned and good men think that it was *the Son of God himself*, who afterward came down to live and die in our world, even *the Lord Jesus Christ*, to whom Jacob referred. If so, Jacob might well speak of his having *redeemed* him from all evil, and pray that his blessing might rest upon the sons of Joseph to redeem them from all evil also. For Christ, you know, is *the great Redeemer* ; who, having poured out his blood on the cross, to save from sin and from hell all who put their trust in him, *will bless them*, and keep them from evil, and

bring them, at last, to be with him, for ever, in the kingdom of heaven.

In praying that *his name and the name of Abraham and Isaac might be named on Ephraim and Manasseh*, Jacob intended to pray that they might be, indeed, placed by God in *the great family* to which he and his father and grandfather belonged, and thus have a share in the blessings that had been promised to Abraham, and Isaac, and himself, and their offspring. Jacob's prayer, that the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh might grow into a multitude, was, at a subsequent period, strikingly answered. For in the time of Moses, less than two hundred and forty years afterward, the number of those, among their descendants, who were twenty years of age and upward, and able to go to war, amounted to eighty-five thousand two hundred, a greater number than were found among the descendants of any other of the sons of Jacob

## CHAPTER XXXI.

Conclusion of Jacob's blessing on the sons of Joseph.—Joseph's portion.—Jacob's prophecy, and blessing his sons. His death.—Does the reader wish to die as Jacob did?

“WHEN Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him : and he held up his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head. And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father : for this is the first born ; put thy right hand upon his head. And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it ; he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great ; (that is, the descendants of Manasseh shall become very numerous and powerful.)

“But truly his younger brother shall be greater than he ; and his seed (or descendants) shall become a multitude of nations.”

In concluding his blessing on the sons of Joseph, Jacob said, “In thee shall Israel (or my descendants, the Israelites) bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim, and as Manasseh. And he set Ephraim before Manasseh.”

By this Jacob meant that Ephraim and his de-

scendants (all of whom, as one people, or tribe, were called Ephraim) would become very powerful and prosperous, and that this would be true also of Manasseh and his descendants; and that the people of Israel, seeing this, when they wished to pray for blessings on any one, would pray that God would make him as prosperous as those who belonged to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

While pronouncing this blessing on his two grandchildren, and in what he soon after said to his own sons before his death, Jacob was undoubtedly under a peculiar influence of the Spirit of God. By this he was enabled to look forward and predict many things which would happen to his descendants; and his predictions were afterward fulfilled in a very remarkable manner.

He spoke now of his approaching dissolution. "Behold, I die; but God shall be with you, (addressing Joseph,) and bring you again unto the land of your fathers;" that is, God will bring your descendants, and the descendants of my other sons—the whole nation of the Israelites—out of Egypt, and carry you back, as a people, to Canaan.

"Moreover, I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

It is supposed that the portion of land which Ja-

cob thus bequeathed to Joseph and his descendants, was in the town of Shechem, and the same which he bought of the sons of Hamor. It is probable that the Amorites took it from him by force, and that he afterward recovered it by fighting for it. Here it was that the remains of Joseph were finally laid; and this is the place mentioned in the fourth chapter of St. John's Gospel, where our Savior is spoken of as coming to "Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph."

The aged patriarch had one more solemn and affecting duty to perform. It was to give to all his sons a prophetic view of what their descendants would be, in their respective families or tribes, when they should be in possession of the land of Canaan.

"Gather yourselves together," said he, "that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father."

There they all stood round the dying bed of their beloved parent, twelve in number, not one was missing. What a scene for him to witness, after all the trials and changes through which both he and they had passed! What affecting counsels, and wonderful predictions for them to hear from the lips of one who, about to enter the unseen world, had the visions of futurity spread out before him!

It would occupy too much time to go through the particulars of this prophecy of Jacob. You can read it at your leisure; or rather, you can *study it* with the aid of your parents and teachers, and of such books as they may provide. For there are many things in it that are difficult to be understood; though, at such time as your age and capacity may render proper, you will find in it a great deal to lead you to admire the wonderful Providence of God, and to see the truth of the Scriptures, in the fulfillment, years after it was given, of this wonderful prophecy.

After uttering it, and blessing each one of his sons, Jacob charged them, in the most solemn manner, to bury him with his fathers in the field of Machpelah, near Hebron. Till this time he had been sitting up on his bed, deriving a momentary strength from the visit of his beloved Joseph, and from the subjects of deep interest which occupied his mind. The spirit of prophecy too, that was shed down upon him, lighted up the faculties of his soul with even more than their usual brightness; and those around him could hardly believe that what they heard came from the lips of one drawing so near to the very close of life.

But he had now discharged his last solemn duties. He had given his sons his parting blessing.



Exhausted by the efforts which he had made, he found himself sinking away, and about to die. He sought to place himself in a composed posture; and gathering up his feet into the bed, and reclining on it, he peacefully breathed his last, and resigned his soul into the hands of his Maker.

*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.*

*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.*

Do you wish thus to die? Trust in God, as Jacob did. Trust in Christ, who is so fully revealed to you as the only Savior. Love him. Obey him. Imitate him. Devote yourself to his service, in the delightful employment of doing good to others. Feel that you are a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth, as Jacob did. Love not the world. Fix your hopes on heaven. Live, as Jacob did, by faith. Desire, when all your work is done, to go to the land of promise in the skies—to *the Canaan of eternal rest*.

Then you may hope to die, as Jacob did, without fear or terror, calmly and sweetly; ready to leave this world of cares and trials, and to go and be for ever with the Lord.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

Joseph's grief at his father's death.—He orders the body to be embalmed.—Mourning for Jacob.—His funeral.—He is buried in the cave of Machpelah.—The fear of Joseph's brethren lest he should punish them.—Pains of a guilty conscience.

JOSEPH was greatly overcome by the death of Jacob. *He fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him.* How strong must have been his attachment to this beloved parent; how deep his sorrow at parting with him!

He had just closed his eyes while dying, and now wished to show him every mark of respect, and to bury him in such a manner, that both his brethren and the Egyptians might see how much he loved and venerated his character.

As was customary at that time, Joseph commanded his servants, the physicians, to embalm his father. This was a curious process, by which the dead body was secured against putrefaction, and its general appearance and features preserved in such a way that it would remain for a long, long course of years.

They were employed forty days in completing this process, which, with the previous thirty, occupied in the preparatory steps, made, in the whole, a period of seventy days, or ten weeks.

This was to Joseph, and the family of Jacob, a season of mourning, in which, we are told, the Egyptians united with them; thus showing how greatly Joseph was esteemed by Pharaoh and his people, and how they sought to manifest their esteem by this expression of sorrow for the death of his venerable father.

At the end of these seventy days Joseph obtained permission of Pharaoh to go to Canaan to bury Jacob, as he had promised him, with an oath, that he would do.

It was a great funeral. Joseph, and all the sons of Jacob, with their families, excepting the young children, attended it. In addition to this, there went up all the officers of government, (*the servants of Pharaoh*, as they are called,) and *the elders of his house, and the elders of the land of Egypt*, persons high in authority and rank. "There went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company."

The distance which this numerous and solemn procession had to go was some hundreds of miles; and as they advanced into Canaan, and came to a

place called Atad, they expressed their sorrow, as was customary at that time, *with a great and very sore lamentation*. And they continued their mourning in this way for seven days.

The Canaanites, who lived in the neighborhood, and who witnessed this striking scene, said, *this is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians*; and they afterward called the place Abel-mizraim, which means, *the place of the Egyptians*.

From this place the procession moved on till it came to Hebron; and there, in the cave of Machpelah, by the side of Abraham and Isaac, of Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah, the remains of Jacob were laid, (as he had solemnly enjoined it upon them to do,) by his own children.

This last sad office of respect being performed to the memory of their deceased parent, Joseph and his brethren, with those who accompanied them, returned to Egypt.

Now that their father was gone, the brethren of Joseph began to fear that he would no longer have any inducement to treat them with kindness. They did not understand his true character: that he was a man who feared God, and had a benevolent and forgiving spirit. They supposed that he still remembered their former cruel and wicked treatment of him with feelings of indignation. They thought

that he had restrained these feelings, and kept them concealed, and conducted toward them as he had done, merely out of respect to their father, and because he did not wish to imbitter his declining days with the sight of contention among his children.

Now this restraint upon Joseph's feelings no longer existed. Their protector was gone. There was no one to interpose between them and their offended brother, and they trembled at the expectation of his vengeance.

You see in this, my dear children, one more striking evidence of *the wretchedness that sin produces.*

Joseph's brethren had still a distinct and vivid recollection of their former guilt. How often, as they saw him from time to time, had the scenes which took place at Dothan risen up before them, and filled them with self-reproach and alarm!

They saw him clad in the splendid robes of his office; but they thought only of his beautiful coat which they had dipped in blood, and with which they had practised such a cruel deception on their distressed father.

They saw him seated in power and dignity, or riding in his splendid chariot; but their imagination drew a more striking picture of the pit in

which they cast him, and of the Ishmaelites, to whom they sold him as a slave.

So it is that past sins will rise up before the mind, and rouse conscience to inflict its severest tortures upon the guilty breast.

And conscience will make the sinner feel *how justly he deserves to be punished*.

This it was that made the brethren of Joseph so apprehensive that he would inflict the severest punishment upon them. They knew that they deserved it, and that, if all that they had done to their brother were known, the Egyptians, and every one else, would think that they ought not to be permitted to escape from justice.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

The brethren of Joseph implore his forgiveness.—He is very kind to them, and allays all their fears.—Their obligations of gratitude to him, and to God.—Has the reader done wrong to others? How does he feel about it?

IN order, if possible, to avert the anger of Joseph, his brethren resolved to make a strong appeal to his feelings. They knew the great love which he had

always shown toward his father, and the affectionate respect with which he cherished his memory.

They sent, therefore, a messenger to Joseph ; fearing to go themselves, lest it should be more likely to rouse the displeasure of their brother against them. Perhaps, too, the person whom they requested to go in their behalf, had influence with Joseph, on account of the worth and respectability of his character, and would be able to procure the entire forgiveness of their evil conduct.

But they relied principally on the nature of the message. For they instructed the person whom they sent, to say to Joseph : “ Thy father did command, before he died, saying, so shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin ; for they did unto thee evil.

“ And now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father.”

It was an appeal to the tender feelings of *a son* ; of a son who had ever most dutifully obeyed the commands, and complied with the requests of a father, to whom his attachment had been devoted and constant !

It was an appeal to the piety of *a friend of God*, of the God of his ancestors, *of the God of his father*, of the God in whom his brethren professed to trust, and whose servants they claimed to be.

As children of the same father ; as worshippers of the same God ; as partakers with him of the blessings of the promises which had been made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; they besought him to forgive them.

Joseph had too many kind and generous feelings ; he was too much above what was mean or revengeful ; he felt too strongly his obligations to God for all his goodness ; he cherished too deeply the spirit of benevolence toward his fellow-men ; and he was too sensible of his own imperfections and sins, to resist this appeal.

It awakened all the better emotions of his heart. It revived the most grateful recollections of his father. It enkindled his warmest piety toward God. He was overcome by it, and melted into tears.

It is probable that he very soon sent for his brethren. For we are told they went to see him, and bowed themselves down, as they had formerly done, in his presence.

And they said, *Behold, we be thy servants.*

*And Joseph said unto them, Fear not : for am I in the place of God ?* as if he had said, " I am but a man like yourselves. Why do you thus stand in awe of me and my displeasure ? It is God who is the judge of your conduct. It is to him that you are accountable for what you have done. It is against *him*



that you have sinned. Humble yourselves before *his presence*. With deep repentance implore *his forgiveness*. So far as I am concerned, let all your apprehensions cease."

"Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear ye not: I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them."

What a relief this must have been to their minds! What an impression it must have made on their hearts, if they had any such feelings as they ought to have had!

Under such affecting circumstances, how they were called upon to exercise gratitude *toward their brother*, for his generous and kind conduct; and a still livelier gratitude *toward God*, for his great forbearance and long suffering. For it was the gracious course of his providence which had over-ruled their wicked designs, and brought out of them so much good to Joseph, the object of their hatred, to their father, and even to themselves and families.

My dear children, have you ever been placed in similar circumstances? Have you ever done wrong toward some one; and afterward had great reproach of conscience; and feared lest God would, in some way or other, punish you for your guilt?

And has it happened that you have been obliged to acknowledge your guilt; and that the person whom you offended has freely forgiven you; and that, thus far, you have not met with the punishment which, you know, your evil conduct deserves?

It is very probable that all this has happened to some of you; and how have you felt under such circumstances?

*Have you felt humbled before God for the sin committed against him?* For, in doing wrong to any of your fellow-men, you break the commands, and despise the authority of God. *He* forbids you to do wrong. *He* requires of you always to do right. *He* enjoins it upon you to love your neighbor as you do yourself, as well as to love Him with your whole soul, and strength, and mind.

*Have you felt truly sorry for the wrong done to the individual, and asked his forgiveness, from the heart, intending to feel and conduct toward him as you ought to do?*

*Have you felt thankful to God that you were spared the punishment which you so justly deserved; and to the individual, for having assured you of his forgiveness and future friendship?*

*Have you resolved, that with the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, assisting you, you will do no*

*such evil thing again, and that you will strive against all sin?*

If you will stop a little, and think seriously, and ask yourself the above questions, you will learn something about *the real state of your heart.*

You will be in the way of finding out (while you know very well how the brethren of Joseph ought to have felt) whether *you have felt* as you ought to have done.

Let your conscience speak. If your heart condemns you, remember that "God is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things."

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy."

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

Joseph near to death.—He makes his brethren swear that his body shall be buried in Canaan; whither, he assures them, the Israelites shall go.—He dies, and his body is embalmed.—Why did he direct his body to be kept in Egypt till the Israelites should go to Canaan?—Wonderful Providence of God.

THE brethren of Joseph returned to their families in Goshen, where they continued to reside. They increased greatly in numbers, and were prosperous in their business, under the protection of the king of Egypt, and the fostering care of their kind brother.

Joseph, in the meanwhile, as we have every reason to suppose, continued to enjoy the favor of Pharaoh, and of the kings who succeeded him, and to hold his office as governor of Egypt, ruling the people mildly and justly, and esteemed by the whole nation.

He lived to see the children of Ephraim and Manasseh, in whose education he took a lively interest, and whom he treated with great affection.

At length the advances of age reminded him that the time of his departure was not far distant. His feebleness increased. He gathered his brethren around him, and told them that he was about to die.

He spoke to them of the promises of God to their fathers, to themselves, and to their descendants.

“God will surely visit you,” said he, “and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”

He knew how important it was for the Israelites, thus to keep their return to Canaan distinctly in view, as the great object of their hopes.

For otherwise they would consider Egypt as their permanent home, and be in danger of mingling with the inhabitants, of falling into their idolatrous practices, and of forgetting the worship of the true God.

Joseph took an oath, also, of his brethren, (as his father Jacob had done of him,) that they would carry his body up with them, whenever they should return to the land of Canaan.

We are not told what other directions or counsel he gave them in his last moments. He soon could speak no longer; and he died in the one hundred and tenth year of his age.

His body was embalmed, and kept in a coffin in Egypt until the Israelites left that country. It was then carried with them into Canaan, and buried in Shechem, in the parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor; and which he gave as an inheritance to the children of Joseph.

It is not improbable that Joseph had a particular

design in thus directing that his body should be kept in Egypt, until the return of the Israëlites to the land of their fathers. His remains would be held by them in great reverence. The place in which they were deposited would often be visited by them, and by their children, and their children's children. For it was nearly one hundred and fifty years after the death of Joseph, before the descendants of Jacob were led out of Egypt by Moses, and went to Canaan.

The spot would be dear to them; a sacred spot; one that would keep alive their grateful recollections, both of Joseph and of his venerable father. It would constantly remind them of their being but *strangers in Egypt*; of the promises of God to give them a better country; and of their solemn duty (as soon as Providence should open the way) to carry back with them the body of Joseph. They would recollect, too, the affecting circumstances under which Joseph had enjoined the performance of this duty upon his brethren. It was in *his dying moments*; and they had bound themselves, in the presence of the Almighty, and under the solemnities of an oath, to see that his directions were faithfully obeyed.

Though dead, he would yet speak to them; and from year to year the monitory voice would be

heard: *God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.*

How wonderful are the ways in which the providence of God brings about his wise and holy purposes! He employed Joseph, during his life, to deliver from famine *that peculiar people*, who were to preserve the knowledge and the worship of the true God; and from whom, in after ages, was to come forth *a mightier deliverer*, Jesus, the Savior of the world.

He employed Joseph, at his death, as one of the means of strengthening the faith of the Israelites in the promise made to their fathers; and of keeping alive among them the desire of returning to *that land* where they were still to be *a peculiar people*; to that land where Christ was to be born, and suffer, and die; to that land from which the glad news of salvation was to be proclaimed to all the inhabitants of the earth.

The singular dreams which Joseph had when he was quite a youth, and which were produced by the influence of God upon his mind, prepared him in some measure for the wonderful dealings of Providence with him. He felt that he was to have an important part to act, though he could not tell what it

would be. This served, no doubt, to elevate his views, and to fit him for the high station in which he was to be placed.

The fulfillment of his dreams, too, must have added great strength to his faith in God. At one time, he saw his brethren bowing down before him in acknowledgment of *his* superiority and of *their* dependence. At another, he received such gifts from his father as showed that Jacob and his family intended to treat him with the respect due to his high rank and power. In presenting these gifts, his brethren again bowed down before him; and in reply to his inquiry concerning their father, they spoke of Jacob as *the servant of Joseph*, and bowed down before him, as if by this name and act of obeisance to show the reverence which *the whole family* had for the governor of Egypt.

At length he saw his father, and his brethren, and their families, settled in the kingdom over which he was exercising the authority of a ruler. They were, in fact, the subjects of his government; nourished by his bounty, and protected by his power.

*The sheaves of his brethren had, indeed, bowed down before his sheaf; and the sun, moon, and eleven stars had made obeisance to him.*



## CHAPTER XXXV.

The character of Joseph.—His strong faith in God.—This the foundation of all real excellence of character.—Has the reader this faith in God ?

God, as we have seen, had a great work for Joseph to do ; and when it was accomplished, he took this faithful servant to himself.

He is now, we have every reason to believe, with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the redeemed of the Lord ; and while his bones are reposing in the land that was promised to his fathers, his spirit is enjoying the bliss and the glory of that better land of promise, the Canaan of eternal rest.

It is to that heavenly inheritance, my dear children, that it has been my great object to direct your attention and excite your hopes, while I have been writing this history of Joseph. And before I conclude, I would lead you, under the blessing of God, to think yet more of the necessity of being prepared, when your work on earth is done, to enter into the rest of heaven, and be for ever with the Lord.

The remains of Joseph, while in Egypt, kindled up the desires of his kindred to go to the land of their fathers.

May the memory of his character, embalmed in

your hearts, awaken within you a still stronger desire to go where *he now is*—to *that heavenly country*, of which Canaan was but a very faint and imperfect resemblance.

Let us for a little while attend to some of the more striking traits of his character. And as we go along, consider how worthy they are of your imitation, and whether you do in any degree possess them.

Joseph had *a strong faith in God*. He did not see God with his bodily eyes, but he believed in his existence, and that he was a Being of infinite *power, wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth*.

He believed that God had made communications, at various times, to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; and that what his father taught him of these communications was true. He believed that the promises which God had made to his ancestors, and to himself, and their descendants, would all be exactly fulfilled.

He believed that he was accountable to God for all his thoughts, and feelings, and conduct; and that, in the future world, God will receive to heaven those only who love and obey him, and banish, for ever, the wicked from his presence.

It is not impossible that he had some knowledge of Christ, and looked forward to this coming Savior,

as *his Savior and hope*. For *Abraham saw the day of Jesus Christ, and was glad*; and it cannot be doubted that he communicated this knowledge to his children, and they to theirs; and that thus Jacob and his family were in possession of it.

In the eleventh chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, you will find that Joseph is numbered among those who were distinguished for *their faith in God, and in his promises*.

"*By faith,*" it is said, "*Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.*"

He did this only because he had an unshaken confidence in the promise of God, that the Israelites should return to Canaan, and enjoy that delightful country as their own.

But if he had such a confidence in that promise of God to the Israelites, as to feel sure of its fulfillment, and to act accordingly; he had the same confidence in all the promises and declarations of God, and acted as if he believed that they also would receive their complete fulfillment.

*This living and active faith* was the foundation of all that was excellent in his character, of all his thoughts, and feelings, and conduct, which were right, and in accordance with *the will of God*.

Just as the strong and heavy stones, which are laid deep in the ground, and put firmly together, and on which the whole house is built and rests,—form *the foundation of the house*.

The builders know this very well, and that, if they design to have the house stand, they must lay a strong and solid foundation.

*Faith in God is the foundation of all real excellence of character.* Without it, there may be an *appearance* of goodness, an outward propriety of conduct, but no right feelings in the heart.

Unless a child believes that his father is a good and just parent, that he governs his family well, and wishes to do all to make them good and happy, and that his commands are right; unless he believes that the threatenings of this parent will be executed, and his promises fulfilled; unless he thus has *faith in the parent*, he will have no true love and obedience to him. He may do things *outwardly* that look like love and obedience, but there will be *no corresponding feelings in his heart*. He will have no right to the character of a dutiful and affectionate child.

In the same way, unless, like Joseph, you have a *strong and active faith in God*, your Heavenly Father, you can have no true love and obedience to him; you can have no right thoughts, and feelings, and conduct; you can have no true excellence of

character; you cannot be prepared to go to heaven when you die.

Have you this faith in God? Do you believe *all* that he has taught you in the Bible, *all* his commands, and promises, and threatenings?

If Joseph had believed only *the one promise* of God, that the Israelites should return to Canaan, this would have been wholly insufficient to lead him to do as we have seen that he did, and to become a truly good man, and to be prepared to go to the heavenly Canaan.

If you believe *all that God has taught you in the Bible*, then you believe that unless you truly repent of your sins, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and show your faith to be sincere, by obeying the commands of God, *you cannot be saved*.

Do you indeed believe these truths; do you feel them; do you practise them?

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

Joseph's affection and dutifulness to his father.—These traits of character, if real and permanent, must grow out of faith in God.—How does the reader treat his parents?—Joseph was kind and affectionate to his brethren.—Faith in God and Christ produces love to others.—Has the reader this love?

ONE consequence of Joseph's faith in God, was his *striking affection and dutifulness to his venerable parent*; and this was another conspicuous trait in his character.

I know that some children, who have a pleasant and amiable disposition, and yet have no such faith in God as Joseph had, show a good deal of affection and dutifulness toward their parents.

But do they do this at all times? Do they do it where the parents *are the friends of God*, as Jacob was, and instruct their children what his commands are, and require them to obey these commands?

Ah! this makes a great difference. There are parents who have no faith in God themselves, and no trust in Christ; and who live and act as if there were no heaven and no hell; and who consider this world as their home; and bring up their children to

feel and to act as they do. Now it is not strange that *such* children should love *such* parents, and sometimes be very affectionate and dutiful to them; though this is very far from always being the case.

But let parents be like Jacob. Let them fear and obey God, and strive to bring up their children *in his fear*; and then it will often happen that these children will have no true and lasting affection and dutifulness to such parents, unless they have also, as Joseph had, *a strong and active faith in God*.

It is the duty of children to love and obey their parents as well in their absence as when they are present; as well in little things as in great; as well, when to obey may be attended with inconvenience, or self-denial, or even suffering, as when it is pleasant and agreeable; as well, with regard to what relates to God and the Savior, to the soul, and to the future world, as with regard to the things of this life.

Children, too, must *hold out* in their affection and dutifulness to their parents. These must be permanent traits of character. They must last through life. They must lead the child at all times, and under all circumstances; in adversity as well as in prosperity, in sickness as well as in health, and especially amid the infirmities and feebleness of declining

years, to do all he possibly can to make his parents comfortable and happy.

Now, if these parents have any true love to God, how anxious they must feel to see their children also the friends of God and of the Redeemer ! How unhappy they must feel to see them living in impenitence and sin !

Children, then, to make pious parents happy, must be pious themselves. And how often it is the case, that parents who have no love to God themselves, and no faith in Jesus Christ, still would be glad to see their children among the number of his followers. For their conscience tells them that this is *the only true good*.

Compare what I have been saying with your own feelings and conduct, and tell me if it is not all true. Yes, it is true. And you cannot be a truly affectionate and dutiful child, so as to have that love to your parents, and perform those duties toward them *which God requires*, unless you have *faith in God*, such faith as Joseph had, and which I have described.

If you love and obey your parents, in any good degree, as you ought, it is because you have faith in God and in Christ ; and your constant prayer should be, that your faith may be increased ; that it may be, like Joseph's, a vigorous and active faith ;



and that it may lead you to be still more affectionate, and still more dutiful, to those who have done so much for you.

And if any of you, my dear children, are disobedient and undutiful to your parents, which there is reason to fear may be the case, think of the great sinfulness of such conduct. It is not only base and ungrateful in the sight of men, but it is peculiarly hateful in the sight of God. It is a direct violation of one of his commandments. It will, if persisted in, and not repented of, draw down upon you the most terrible expressions of his displeasure.

It shows that you have no *true faith in God*, no love toward him, no desire to do his will.

Can you dare to remain any longer in this state?

Joseph's faith in God produced another striking trait in his character—*kind and affectionate feelings toward his brethren, and a desire to do those good who had done him much evil.*

Nothing but that faith in God and the Redeemer which leads us *to believe* all that the Bible teaches us concerning the character of God and of Christ, and *to love* them, and *to desire to be like them*; nothing but such a faith can produce in the heart any true love to our fellow-men. And, on the other hand, if we truly love our fellow-men, and desire to

promote their best good, both in this world and the next, it is one of the best evidences we can have that we truly love God.

Are *you* like Joseph in this respect? Do you feel and conduct toward your brothers and sisters as he did toward his brethren? Do you try to do them all the good in your power? Do you try to do their souls good? Do you kindly advise them, if you see them doing wrong? Do you set them a good example in your own conversation and conduct? Do you pray that you may be enabled to do this? Do you pray for them, that God would give them his Holy Spirit and make them the followers of Christ? Are you patient and meek if they say or do any thing to irritate or injure you? Do you feel no resentment or revenge toward them? Do you forgive them, and return good for their evil? Do you pray to God to forgive them, and to lead them to better feelings and conduct?

Without such feelings and conduct toward *your brothers and sisters*, you show that you have no true love to your fellow-men, and that you have no true love to God.

You show that you are quite unlike Joseph; that you are quite unlike the pure and holy beings with whom he is now so happy in loving and serving God; and that, continuing as you are, you are

wholly unfit to go to that world where all is love, and peace, and joy.

Into that world none can be admitted whose sins are not forgiven through the blood of Christ. And he himself has declared, that if you *forgive not others*, you can have *no hope of forgiveness from God*.

“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and mind,—and thy neighbor as thyself.”

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

Joseph's fidelity in the discharge of his duties.—Instances of it.—It grew out of his faith in God.—Has the reader the same fidelity, growing out of the same faith?

JOSEPH had a vigorous and active faith in God. He believed that the eye of God was upon him at all times; and this led him to *great fidelity in the*

*discharge of his duties toward those who employed him.*

This trait of his character shone forth in all the situations in which he was placed.

He felt it to be a duty that he owed to his father, to tell him of the wicked conduct of some of his brethren, and he did not fear to discharge his duty.

He faithfully obeyed his father in going first to Shechem, and afterward to Dothan, to see his brethren, notwithstanding he must certainly have had some reason to fear their resentment.

He was so faithful while a servant, or rather slave, in the house of Potiphar, that he was intrusted by the latter with the charge of all his domestic concerns.

While a prisoner, his conduct in small things was such—his faithfulness in complying with all the regulations and commands of the keeper—that he was intrusted with the care of the other prisoners, and with the management of the whole prison. And doubtless, in this difficult and responsible situation, he showed equal fidelity in the discharge of his duties.

All this was strengthening his habits, and forming his character, and preparing him to be able to discharge still more arduous duties with still greater fidelity and success.

No doubt Pharaoh had heard of his conduct while with Potiphar, and in the prison, and he knew that *such a man could be trusted.*

He elevated Joseph near to the throne, and made him governor of Egypt.

In that arduous and laborious station, and in the midst of the most trying circumstances, you have seen with what fidelity he performed his duty. How exactly he carried into effect all the wishes of the king for the relief of the Egyptians; and how faithfully he fulfilled all his own promises to his father and to his brethren.

He looked to God, indeed, for his Holy Spirit, that he might be thus faithful. He knew that every good thought, and feeling, and purpose, must come from above. Under all circumstances, he felt the need of divine wisdom, grace, and strength. He prayed for them. And *he was a man of prayer, because he was a man of faith.* See what it is to be *a truly good man.* Such an one is faithful in the discharge of all his duties to *his fellow-men*, as well as those which he owes more directly to God.

He is faithful *in small things* as well as in great. He is faithful when removed from the sight of his fellow-men, as well as when in their presence. He is faithful as well in adversity as in prosperity; as well when he meets with injustice and oppression,

as when he receives approbation and his due reward.

Such was the faithfulness of Joseph. Is such *your faithfulness* to your parents, to your instructors, to your employers, to all to whom you have made any promises, or toward whom you have any duties to perform.

Without such faithfulness, *in small things, too, as well as great*, your character will be exceedingly defective, even in the opinion of your fellow-men.

You will fail of securing their confidence. They will not trust you with any business of importance. You will find it very difficult, if not impossible, to succeed in what you undertake.

But what is worse, your conscience will condemn you. You will feel that you have done wrong to others, that you have not done to *them* as you would have them do to you, and that you are unworthy of their confidence and esteem.

You will lose, too, the favor of God. *He sees* all who are unfaithful, at all times, and in all places. You cannot escape his notice. You will have to render to him a strict account for all your want of fidelity in the discharge of the duties which you owe to your fellow-men.

Pray ; strive that you may be kept from such guilt and folly. Pray for faith in God, for *a deep and*

*constant feeling that his eye is always upon you, and for a willingness and courage to be faithful in the discharge of your duties, and the fulfillment of your promises to your fellow-men; because it is his will that you should thus show your love to him, and obedience to his commands.*

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Joseph's resolution in resisting temptation.—It grew out of his faith in God.—The reader has his temptations.—How to get strength to overcome them.—Joseph's dependence on God, and submission to his will.—These grew out of his faith in God.—Has the reader this dependence and submission?

WE have seen in one event of Joseph's life, how his faith in God enabled him to resist and overcome a temptation to very great wickedness. From his conduct at that time, we have reason to conclude that *the strength of his obedience to the commands of God, and his fear of sinning against him, when exposed to powerful temptation, was another striking trait in his character.*

That he was often exposed to such temptations, there can be no doubt. Living in the midst of an

idolatrous and wicked people, and, during the principal part of his life, with kings, and those who were abundant in wealth and high in rank, he must have had many inducements of pleasure, and allurements of sin, to draw him aside from the love and service of God.

His whole character, as it appears in the history to which we have been attending, and especially in the latter part of it, shows that he must have resisted many temptations, and manifested his devotedness of heart and life to the God of his fathers.

Temptations are not confined to the rich and powerful. No station or age is free from them.

You have your peculiar temptations. Some companion invites you to go to places, or to do things, which you know to be wrong, and often highly offensive to God. Or, some alluring object is presented to you, in pursuing and attaining which you are sensible that you will be led to forget God, and your duty toward him.

Now, under such circumstances, what has been your conduct? Have you yielded to such temptations, or have you, like Joseph, resisted and overcome them?

The oftener you yield, the less and the less will be your power of resistance.



The oftener you overcome, the easier will be each future struggle and victory.

But to resist and to overcome temptation, you must have, as Joseph had, *a vigorous and active faith in God*. You must feel that he is near you, noticing all that you say and do, and looking into your inmost thoughts. You must feel, that it is great guilt and folly to offend so good and just a Being, that his displeasure is to be dreaded as the worst of evils, and the preservation of his favor as the only true happiness.

*How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!* was the pious exclamation of Joseph, when exposed to temptation.

Let it be *yours*, when *you are tempted*. It is your only safety. Without it, and without that faith in God from which it proceeds, you are in the midst of dangers, in this wicked and ensnaring world, which you may little suspect or fear, but which may prove your ruin, both in this life and that which is to come.

Go to Christ. Trust in him. Pray, in his name, for strength from above to resist temptation, and it shall be given you; and you shall triumph over the enemies of your soul.

Neglect to do this, and you will yield to one temptation after another, till you become *the slave*

of sin, with no hope of escape from its dreadful bondage.

Another trait in the character of Joseph, and intimately connected with the one which we have been considering, was *his feeling of dependence on God, and submission to his will.*

This too, like all his other good traits of character, grew out of his faith in God. This faith led him to have a deep and abiding conviction of *the providence of God*, extending to all events, the most minute as well as the greatest.

He felt that he was continually under the care and direction of this providence of God, and that, without it guiding and sustaining him, *he could of himself do nothing.*

This feeling of dependence on God produced, in the mind of Joseph, *submission to the will of God.*

He felt that God had a right to do with him as he deemed best; and we find that, in the most trying and distressing circumstances, Joseph had a patient and uncomplaining spirit.

Have *you* this feeling of dependence on God, and submission to his will?

Ah! how prone you are to rely on your own strength, and to feel as if every thing must yield to *your will!*

"You can do this, and *you* can do that," you say—

“you *know* you can. *You* are not afraid of falling into such and such disgraceful and wicked conduct.”

And then, how often *your will* has resisted the will of your parents, and of others whom God has commanded you to obey ; while in this, and in various other ways, *you have resisted the will of God himself.*

How many times, too, you have shown a fretful, murmuring and complaining spirit ; discontented with what your parents and friends thought best for you, and dissatisfied with the dealings of God’s providence toward you.

Has it not been so in too many instances ? And does it not all show how much you need to humble yourself before God ; to repent of these and all your other sins ; to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness, and acceptance with God ; and to pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit, that you may be led to feel your dependence on God, and to have an entire submission to his will.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

Joseph's humility.—Proofs of it.—Humility in good men grows out of their faith in God.—Has the reader this humility?—Without it we can have no interest in Christ.

*Humility* I think deserves to be noticed as a trait in the character of Joseph. It is not so striking, perhaps, as some others, and yet it would seem that he possessed it in no inconsiderable degree.

If he had been a proud person, and inclined to think highly of himself, there was much in his elevation to the entire charge of Potiphar's domestic concerns to awaken such feelings within his breast.

And if he had been thus puffed up by his elevation, is it at all probable that he would have had such faith in God, such a fear of sinning against him, and such strength to overcome a powerful temptation?

*"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."* Would Joseph have had this grace given to him, if he had not been humble?

There was much in the circumstances attending his being brought before Pharaoh to excite his pride, if he had not been, on the whole, and habitually, a person of humility.

The wise men of Egypt, many in number, and greatly respected both by the king and people, in vain attempted to interpret his dreams. Joseph, a young man, was sent for, and requested to do what all these wise men had confessed was far beyond their skill.

Pharaoh addressed him, as if he thought Joseph himself had the power of making the interpretation.

What a strong temptation to conceal the truth, and to excite toward himself the admiration and respect of the Egyptian monarch, and his whole circle of wise men, and officers, and men of high rank around him! But Joseph's *faith in God* was vigorous and active at the time. He knew that all his skill to interpret dreams came from above; and with a becoming modesty, and true humility of character, he said, "*It is not in me : God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.*"

In his subsequent very high exaltation to be governor of Egypt, and in all his deportment toward his brethren and father, and treatment of them, there is nothing that looks like boasting or pride. On the contrary, his kind and forgiving spirit; the great affection and respect which he manifested toward his aged parent; his always referring his elevation to the providence of God; and the memorable words with which he endeavored to allay the fears of his

brethren, when they dreaded his just resentment, "*Fear not; for am I in the place of God?*" all these things tend to show that he must have had *true humility of character.*

And such is the character of all good men, whatever their possessions, or learning, or rank, or reputation may be.

They are sensible—as I have no doubt Joseph was—how very little they know, although others may esteem them wise; and how imperfect and sinful they have been, and continue to be, although others may regard them with approbation and esteem.

*Their faith in God* leads them to look up to him as a Being of spotless purity and perfect holiness of character, and to feel very humble in his presence. And when they look round on their fellow-men, should they see any not loving and serving God as they hope *they do*, or *their inferiors* in any respect, they ask themselves, *who maketh me to differ?*

They know that they are naturally no better than others; that if there is a difference, *the grace of God* has made it; and that, in their intercourse with their fellow-men, they should cultivate *a meek and quiet spirit*; remembering, that "before honor is humility," and that "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Are you among the number of those who are thus *poor in spirit*? Do you know what it is to feel truly humble in the sight of God on account of your great unworthiness; that you have sinned against him so often, and so much; and that you have loved and served him so little, or, perhaps, *not at all*?

How do you feel and conduct toward those around you? Do you feel proud of your appearance and dress; of the family to which you belong; of your attainments of any kind; of your prospects in life; or perhaps, even of your good feelings and conduct?

Do you treat others with unkindness or neglect, with haughtiness or contempt? Do you look on any, even the most degraded and worthless, as beneath your notice?

I propose these inquiries, that you may *look back* upon your past conduct, and *look into* your present thoughts and feelings, and see whether you have any true *humility of spirit*.

Without such humility you can have no interest in Jesus Christ and his salvation. He was himself *meek and lowly in heart*; and such must all his followers be.

Had he not *humbled himself*, and been willing to leave the glories of his heavenly state, and lead a

life of reproach, and die a death of ignominy, what would have been our condition? Lost, undone, hopeless, we should have perished in our sins if this Savior had not humbled himself to redeem us from sin and hell.

And shall *we* not be humble; *we*, poor, miserable sinners, who have so much that ought to make and keep us humble! *We* be proud and haughty!

What *are* we—what *have* we—to be proud of!

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## CHAPTER XL.

Joseph had general benevolence of character.—This grew out of his faith in God.—The reader can do good in many ways.—Has he a desire to do good?—Does this desire lead to action.—Where there is no such desire and conduct, there is great guilt and danger.

FROM all that we have seen of the character of Joseph, we must conclude that it was one of *general benevolence*.

*Faith worketh by love.* In other words, a true faith in God always produces in the heart a desire to do good to others; and this desire is accompanied by corresponding conversation and conduct.



Such was the faith of Joseph. It led him to exercise good-will toward his fellow men, and to endeavor to do them good.

We do not find him laying plans for himself alone, so as to promote his own ambitious views. Throughout the whole course of his life, his elevation and power were brought about by the providence of God, and not by his own seeking.

The general esteem, too, in which he appears to have been held, both by the king and the whole nation, shows the kind and benevolent character of his conduct. Had it been otherwise, the kindred of Joseph would not have been welcomed so cordially by Pharaoh, nor such striking respect been shown to Jacob in the great attendance at his funeral.

No other than a kind and benevolent ruler would have received such marks of respect and attachment from a powerful monarch and his numerous subjects.

*To endeavor to do good to others;* this should be the great object of your desires and your efforts. Even young as you are, there are many ways in which you can do this.

How often, while with your brothers and sisters and companions, you can say something, or do something in a kind manner, that will tend to make them better and happier.

Are there no poor persons, also, in your neighborhood, to whom your parents or friends are willing to give something which you can carry to them, and thus get the habit, in your younger days, of relieving the wants of the necessitous ?

Are you not old enough to earn something by your own labor, that you can give to some one of the benevolent objects in which good people are engaged ?

Have you not opportunities every day (while you feel for the souls of those around you, and pray for them) of saying something to them that, under the blessing of God, may lead them to the Savior, and to imitate his example ?

Have you *a desire* thus to do good to others ? If you have, I rejoice greatly, and pray that it may increase, and that you may live to have such benevolent feelings form *the constant state of your soul*, and make you more and more like the inhabitants of heaven, and prepare you to be holy and happy with them, for ever.

But remember, that if you truly have such a desire, it will manifest itself *in action*—in something that *you say and do*.

If you are saying and doing nothing to make others better and happier, then it is certain that you have *no feelings of benevolence* toward them.

For benevolent feelings will lead *to benevolent conduct* as surely as a good fruit-tree will bear good fruit, or a pure fountain send forth pure water.

Have you no such benevolent feelings? Have you no desire to make those around you good and happy? Do you take no interest in the welfare of their immortal souls?

Ah! my dear children, if such is the case with any of you, you are in a state of great guilt and danger.

*God is love.* He is perfectly benevolent. He delights in doing good. He is incessantly doing good.

*Jesus Christ is perfectly benevolent.* Think of what he has done and suffered to make you and others eternally happy, if you will but trust in him, and imitate his blessed example.

*The inhabitants of heaven are perfectly benevolent.* They delight in loving and serving God; in promoting the holiness and happiness of all around them, and in executing any of the commands of God in his designs of benevolence and mercy.

*And you have no such benevolent feelings!* You do nothing to make others better and happier. You think only of yourself, and how you may have this and the other means of enjoyment. You are willing that your parents and friends and others should contribute to *your* happiness, and yet you regard not *theirs*.

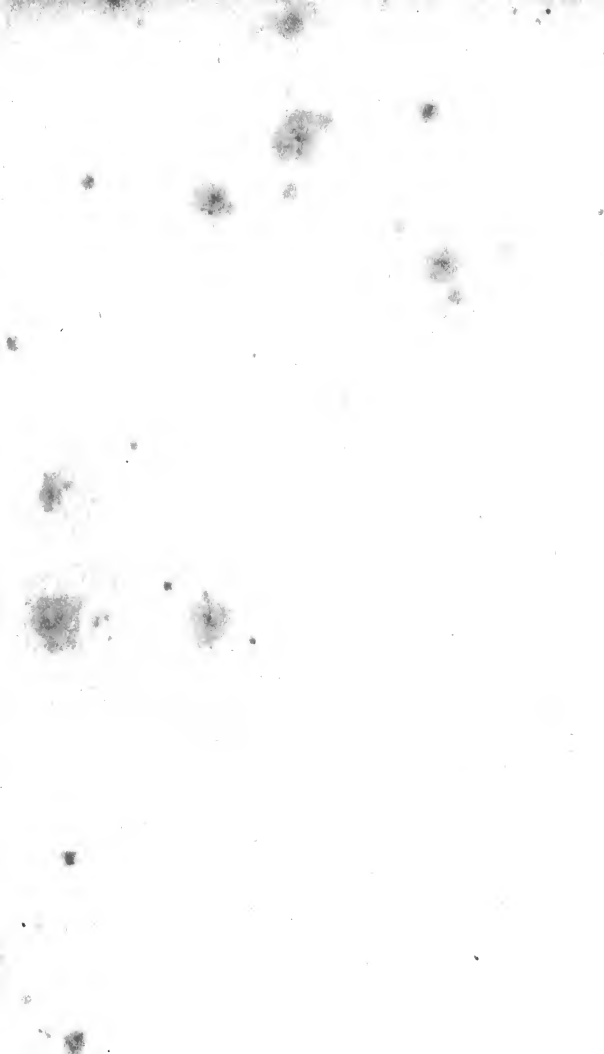
Does not this show that you are very selfish and sinful? How can God look on you but with displeasure? How can he receive you to heaven, unless there is *a great change in your feelings and conduct?*

You need this change, so that love to God and love to your fellow-men may take the place of your present selfish feelings and conduct.

But there will be no such change, you will not even *begin* to feel and act right, till you do *two things*; till you feel truly sorry for your selfishness and sins, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to save you from all sin. Here you must *begin*.

Will you begin *now*, and humbly confess your sinfulness to God, and look to Christ for salvation, and pray for the Holy Spirit to be shed down upon your soul, that thus *a great change* may take place in it; a change from sin to holiness; a change from a selfish regard to your own happiness, *to an ardent love to God and the Savior, and a desire to do all in your power to make others good and happy?*

THE END.













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